

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`




6000650610



BARBARA'S WARNING.

LONDON : PRINTED BY
EDWARD J. FRANCIS, TOOK'S COURT,
CHANCERY LANE, E.C.

BARBARA'S WARNING.

A Novel.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "RECOMMENDED TO MERCY," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



BODLEIANA

London:
SAMUEL TINSLEY,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.
1874.

[*All rights reserved.*]

251. b. 184.



BARBARA'S WARNING.

CHAPTER I.

THE wedding was a very "gay" one, and Lady Arthur St. George thoroughly enjoyed the foreign tour, which lasted till the "fall of the leaf" reminded her husband that there were other amusements "going," besides the one which, at the end of three months, he had more than begun to tire of.

He had been very attentive—very *good*, as he himself thought, to his bride. He had not married for love, but to "make" it, when the *object* is under twenty, and has only *just* missed being a beauty, is no such difficult matter; and, as I said before, Lord Arthur had played his part well; so well, indeed, that Florence, totally forgetting that these were "early days" for boasting, wrote

in triumph to Barbara, playfully calling the latter a "false prophet," a "bird of ill omen," and expressing in glowing terms the delight she felt in the prospect of coming home to show Rita, with that unbelieving young person's own eyes, how utterly baseless had been her friend's auguries of evil.

"We are to go," so Lady Arthur wrote, "in the first instance, to Somerford. Lord Uppingham has written in the kindest way, pressing us to come, and though Arthur calls his brother a "prig," and rather laughs at him, I think he likes to go there, all the same."

"Of course he does," Barbara, laying down the letter with a sigh, says to herself. "The shooting is first-rate, and the country a hunting one, besides—" And then Mrs. Fendall's thoughts wander away towards the more distant future—to the probability which exists (Lord Uppingham's own health being delicate, and his marriage, an event of no very recent occurrence, not having been as yet followed by the birth of an heir) that a Marchioness's coronet may one day

adorn the brows of the dead lawyer's daughter.

"Dear Flossie! I hope she may have a son," thinks kind-hearted Barbara. "It would make her of importance in the family, and that would *tend* more than anything else to keep her husband in order."

Scarcely a fortnight has elapsed since Barbara, writing from a friend's house in Sussex, (a house brimful of pleasant people, and where she is comfortably realizing the truth that "a pretty woman is a welcome guest,") answered, in her cordial, lively way, Lady Arthur's letter, when the latter writes again—and this time in a somewhat hurried and disconnected fashion—that *they* were hastening back from Munich, in order to be in time for a grand battue at Somerford on the fifteenth.

"I had no idea that Arthur was so desperately fond of shooting," so his wife expressed herself; "you would really imagine, by the tearing way in which we are to post back, that it is an affair of life or death."

There was not a word in *this* letter of joyful anticipations—no syllable that could recall to Barbara the writer's former threat of triumphantly displaying (in happy vindication of her own rashness) Lord Arthur in the character of a model and devoted husband. It is true that the letter was a hurried one, but *that*, in Mrs. Fendall's opinion, did not sufficiently account for a certain *tone*, which, pervading, as it did, the whole, conveyed to her mind the painful impression that Flossie was beginning to "awaken as one out of slumber," a slumber by which, at least so Barbara decided, her poor friend had been (despite the blissful dreams in which her senses had been lulled) neither strengthened nor refreshed.

They had travelled very comfortably, and after a fashion which Flossie, whose sole experience of foreign locomotion was of a far less luxurious kind, thought and called "perfection"; whilst her husband, when he *did*—which, at the outset of their journey, was not frequently—express an opinion on the subject, took care that his remarks should

not be over-laudatory. That he should be *there* at all, with an excellent courier (combining in his person the office of valet), and able to vie in expenditure even with those aggravating millionaires from over the water, who have taken our place as "Milords," with an *ôte-toi de là que je m'y mette* air that is certainly trying, was, of course, entirely owing to Florence. To, however, even tacitly admit this fact, was a proceeding directly contrary both to Lord Arthur's nature and principles. Having, for the second time, laid himself (rather than put his own hand to the plough, and exert the talents that God had given) under pecuniary obligations of no small amount to a woman, he did not possess sufficient breadth of mind, or generosity of feeling, to enable him to accept his position with a good grace, and thankfully. On the contrary, as is not unfrequently the case with minds which are cast in a narrow mould, *his* gradually but surely took a *warp* against the one to whom he owed the wealth, the deliverance from debt and difficulty—every blessing, in short, which his union

with Florence Bloxholme had brought to him in its train!

Their shortened tour is over now—over, at least, as regards continental steaming; and the newly-married pair, Flossie looking especially bright and happy, in a travelling costume which no English fingers could have *confectioned*, and few figures of any land could so well have worn, is seated opposite her husband in the train that is bearing them, at express speed, northwards to Somerford.

Lord Arthur, handsomer in Flossie's eyes than ever, is opening, with the ivory cutter which she has taken out of her travelling-bag, the pages of *Bell's Life*, and his young wife, who has not yet learned, by the sad experience which alone is capable of impressing small but important every-day truths upon the memory, that there is, in domestic life, a time for all things, rashly breaks in upon a quiet which a better acquaintance, not only with her husband's tastes and habits, but with the knittings of a brow that is just now verging on a state of corrugation, might

have enabled her to perceive was a proceeding which had better be avoided,—

"I wonder," she says, following her own train of thought, and suddenly remembering that since the reading of a letter to herself which she had that morning received from Lady Uppingham she had had no opportunity of "comparing notes" with Arthur on the subject,—"I wonder what sort of people the Callverts are who are staying, Cornelia writes, at Somerford? Do you know them? Are they nice? It is such an odd name, or, rather, such an odd way of spelling their name."

Neither the question nor the interruption of his studies being agreeable to his autocratic Lordship, he answers with a short—

"I don't see anything particularly odd in it. All names can't be spelt alike; and as to their being 'nice,' as you call it, tastes differ as to that, you know. What 's one man's meat is another man's poison."

And having so said, Lord Arthur returns again to his *Bell's Life*, hoping, probably, that

he had made his desire to remain undisturbed during its perusal sufficiently apparent.

And it would have been far better for poor Flossie, who had flushed up painfully under the sting of the first scathing words which—as addressed to *her*, at least—she had ever heard from her husband's lips, had she kept silence even from the apologetic words that flowed, with the swiftness born of a penitent spirit, from her tongue.

"How stupid of me! I quite forgot that you hated one to call people 'nice'; and—"

She is going on with her apology, eager—*stupidly* eager—to prove that even in a matter of such small moment she is sorry to have run counter to his prejudices, when the absorbed attention—an attention which, seeing that he is being personally appealed to by his *tête-à-tête* companion, more than borders on rudeness—arrests, with a sensation that chills, and almost frightens her, the current of her speech.

For the *first* time—and let any woman of experience say whether such a *first time* was not to her a bitter and a trying moment—

Flossie's husband has "forgotten," *à son égard* (as the French say), "his manners," treating her, as the poor young creature feels, in a fashion which, had she not been his wife, he would not have dared to venture on, and thus preparing her — a preparation which terribly clouds over the, till now, sunny vista of her future — for the description of behaviour towards her on Lord Arthur's part, of the likelihood of which Barbara Fendall had especially warned her.

"My dear, he won't have been married to you six months before he will have sworn at you as roundly as if you were his servant keeping him waiting when the bell rang."

And Florence—unbelieving Florence—had laughed, as the *fey* who are doomed to early death laugh, at her friend's remark.

"I shan't mind if he does, in a pet; and if I deserve it, which, of course, I shall—"

"Ah! but he will be rude—overbearing; he will forget that you are a lady—"

"He *cannot*, for he is a gentleman," Florence had said, proudly; and the friends had parted in one of those small transient

tiffs which somewhat marred, in those pre-matrimonial days, the pleasure of their intercourse.

And now the rapidly awakening bride, seated opposite to the man who, in condescending to "marry beneath him," fancies that he has given good value for the £70,000 that he had so sorely needed, thinks, with a trembling heart, of Barbara's many warnings, and the shadow of coming gloom spreads over her spirits.

CHAPTER II.

It was nearly dark when they reached the little way-side station, built on the Somerford property, and expressly for the convenience of the great family of the neighbourhood, and which stood, on the outskirts of a bleak moor, within two miles of the castle. The carriage which had been promised to meet the coming guests happened to be ten minutes late—an interval of time which was spent by Lord Arthur in fretting and fuming up and down the little wooden platform, whilst Florence, who had her own private sense of wrong to nourish and keep warm, remained inside the one small shelter that served the various purposes of waiting-room, ticket-office, and luggage ditto.

Like a foolish young wife as she is, and as many a young wife has been before her, and will be, probably, as long as marrying and

giving in marriage form portions of the world's social system, Florence had not even so much as turned over in her mind the expediency—to say nothing of the duty involved in the question—of condoning the grievous offence towards her (for so Flossie considered it) of which her husband had been guilty. The suffering which those hasty, discourteous words had caused to her was great, and promised to be lasting; surely, therefore, as she emphatically told herself, it was only just that Arthur, in his turn, should be made to *feel*, and eke to show, a proper amount of penitence for his transgression? It was not in human nature, and certainly not in Flossie's, to let the culprit off scot-free — the offended one meanwhile maintaining an equable and pleasant demeanour, as though, forsooth, nothing had been said or done to vex her; and this being so, Florence, albeit a word of kindness would have softened her at once into her normal condition of love and amiability, finally closed her lips, and hardened her heart against the softer sensations, which, nevertheless, rose

up too strongly in her breast to be easily repressed. There was, in truth, a war between her worse and better feelings going on within her—a state of things which, till the horses slackened their pace to a walk (for the ascent to the castle was, at the last, rather hard against the collar), was utterly lost upon Lord Arthur. He had always—always, at least, when his purse happened to be not hopelessly empty—felt himself to be a trifle *grand* when within the magnificent ancestral precincts of Somerford. The possibility that he might one day find himself lord and master of all, with an income large enough to gratify every expensive taste, and with rank sufficiently exalted to dazzle society into sin-blindness, was one which, for many a year past, had never entirely floated out of Lord Arthur's self-occupied mind. Even his brother's marriage to a pretty, but brainless American—an event which had happened some two years previously—had done little more than temporarily check the vague hopes and aspirations to which, save when communing with the *ego* he loved so well, his

Lordship gave no utterance. As yet, at least so far as "the world" knew, there existed no prospect of an heir, in the direct line, to the title and estates of Uppingham. The New York beauty was a little "fast," and, moreover, sufficiently addicted to field sports to render the coming of her pretty self to grief over a "bullfinch," or a treacherous "wire," far from impossible. That Lord Arthur went so far as to calmly contemplate—with wishes that were parents to the thought—the chances for or against any *very* serious accident happening to "Cornelia," would be going too far, but to truthfully affirm that he would not have inwardly rejoiced over any "trifling" hunting-field mishap that might have diminished the chances of a little "stranger" making its appearance in the long disused Uppingham nurseries, would be impossible. Some unanalyzed feeling of this kind, is perhaps passing through his mind, when he says, abruptly, to the bride, who is sitting in comfortless dignity by his side,—

"I wonder if Cornelia will be in good

riding form. You will like to see some cub-hunting? Eh?"

The carriage has drawn up under the portico, as the last sharp note of interrogation jars upon poor Flossie's ear. She certainly had shown no eagerness of response, — *that*, her sense of what was due to her own dignity, forebad; but she *is* thoroughly startled and dismayed, when, before he springs from the carriage, her husband finds time, with a shrug of his shoulders, to say,—

"Oh! sulky, are you? That's all right. Please yourself; it don't hurt me."

And the next moment, before she has time to recover herself, they are in what is called the armoury-hall, with bright lights gleaming on morion and breastplate, gauntlet and battle-axe, whilst a bright *living* figure, in all the glory of her sunshiny youth glides in, and kisses the weary traveller on both cheeks.

"You dear! But how pale! Not a bit like a bride! Arthur, what has she been about? You have rattled her to death! Come away, you poor ill-used thing. Oh, by the

way, Arthur, you must go and see Upp in his room. I am *so* sorry, he has got a touch of his old complaint which always puzzles the doctors. I hope he will be able to come down to-morrow; in the mean time, we have only the Callverts—*my* people, you know, at least they are thousandth cousins—and Frank Chamberlayne, who really is a host in himself! As to his having been spoony, you know *where*," in a sort of stage-whisper to Florence, as they all walk up the broad staircase together, "I don't believe a word of it."

Half an hour—*the* half hour which Lady Uppingham has, at her guest's earnest request, allowed that now utterly subdued in spirit young wife to "lie down quietly" and recover in—has elapsed, and again the good-natured, restless chatelaine is at the door, with a *tap-tap*, and a "May I come in?" which she answers herself, by bringing her blonde head and trailing Parisian draperies to the side of her sister-in-law's sofa.

"My dear Flossie, you must come down, you really must, to the billiard-room. I *cannot* undertake," with an honest, loud Yankee

laugh, "the entire responsibility of the ladies in the billiard-room. Frank Chamberlayne may be trusted anywhere, but your husband, my dear, is such an awful flirt! *And* so handsome! Don't you think him so? But, of course, you do, or you wouldn't have married him. You were not a poor penniless chip of the aristocracy like me, and could pick and choose, which *must* be so nice—"

And the silly thing, caring, from mere want of thought, nothing for the effects which her words might produce, eyes her pink and white face complacently in the pretty mirror that stands upon the sofa-table, and, in that pleasant occupation, has almost forgotten what words had been on the tip of her tongue to speak.

Which Florence is very far from having done! The notion that Arthur,—*her* Arthur, the Arthur whom she has so lately discovered to be proof against such small feminine weapons as she can bring to bear upon him, —is "flirting," *awfully* flirting, with some loud-voiced, forward creatures, to whom he is probably explaining some of the mysteries of

the game he understands so well, and plays, Flossie thinks, *so* gracefully, is positively hateful to contemplate; so, with a laugh, and a—"Oh, I am quite rested; I should like so to see your cousins,"—she shakes out her plumage,—*id est*, the pretty Parisian travelling dress, which Cornelia, who, like all her country-women, believes herself to be an oracle in matters of female costume, has pronounced to be as nearly the right thing as possible,—and together the two ladies make their way to the room where, as Lady Uppingham expresses it, "larking" at high pressure is being carried on.

CHAPTER III.

THEY have been a week at Somerford, and during all that time, the illness which confines Lord Uppingham to his room has only been very gradually yielding to the remedies which—working, as they confessed they did, almost altogether in the dark—the medical men who attended the patient sufferer had had recourse to.

Lord Uppingham was a singularly unselfish man. In common with the generality of his sex, he disliked being "made a fuss about," but, unlike that generality, he took infinite pleasure in the thought that *his* suffering, his dreary confinement to his room, need not be any bar to the enjoyment of others beneath his roof.

"You must contrive, dear Neelie, that Atty and his wife don't find it a bore being here," he had said more than once to his

wife, who, nothing loth, acted up, as best she could, to his wishes, paying—whilst exerting herself to the utmost to make the old castle a pleasant abiding-place—flying visits to the sick-room, where, even in the midst of his sharpest pain, "Upp" would greet her with a wan smile of welcome.

"And how do you and Florence hit it off?" he asked her on one occasion. He was—to the delight of all the household, especially the older servants, who shook their heads ominously at the notion of wild Lord Arthur's rule—recovering both strength and spirits, a fact which was demonstrated by this display of interest in passing events.

"Oh, very well. Beautifully, perhaps, I ought to say."

"Not if you don't think it, dear. I asked really for information. Does Flossie —*he* calls her Flossie, does he not?—strike you—now you have seen more of her—as being as nice as you thought her at the wedding?"

Lady Uppingham takes a little time to consider ere she replies, for she has an

instinctive feeling that "Upp" thinks there is more "in her" than she is herself conscious of there being, and she has no wish—far, indeed, from it—to undeceive him. At last she says, a trifle haltingly,—

"I hardly know, I don't indeed. I fancied her such a much more *talky* girl, and now she has so very little to say. Do you know, dear, I sometimes think—it's so very awful" —lowering her voice to a whisper—"but one can't always help seeing things, you know—that Florence is not happy. She does not look the least as she did in London, —not bright and hopeful, don't you know? I am sometimes afraid—though it seems hardly possible, Flossie is so nice-looking, not a beauty, you know,"—glancing at a convenient looking-glass—"exactly, and they have been married so very short a time, —that Arthur has already grown tired of her, and that *she has found it out.*"

Three days have elapsed since this short dialogue—one which left kind-hearted Lord Uppingham much to ponder over—took place between him and his well-meaning, though

thoughtless wife. It is a lovely day in late October, and into the library, where "Upp" —convalescent now—is making himself as pleasant as he knows how to his young sister-in-law, the sun is shining with a brilliancy which is capable of causing the sanguine to forget that winter is now nigh at hand.

"Well, so you did not go with them to the meet, after all?" was Lord Uppingham's greeting to Florence, when, the remainder of the guests having all, "on pleasure bent," ridden or driven from the door, she, feeling a little forlorn and deserted, wandered for companionship into the sunny "small library," of which the master of the house, seeing that of his private suite of rooms it formed a part, had given her the *entrée*.

A fire of wood, which the sun is trying, with good appearance of success, to "put out," is burning on the hearth; and Florence, sitting in a listless attitude before it, might as well—seeing that she has not read a word of it—have left the book which she holds in her hand upon the shelf. Lord

Uppingham has been writing letters, but growing tired of the occupation (he soon tires now of many an act which formerly was a source of pleasure to him), he buries himself in an arm-chair that commands a view of his companion's pensive face, and says, kindly,—

"Is is such a glorious day—we cannot expect many more such—I had half a mind to try and coax you out myself."

"You are very good—*too* good to me; but it was too early. I never feel very well in the morning—" And she stops abruptly, blushing, with almost a sense of guilt upon her conscience, as the searching eyes, with a mild and tender interest, are still, as she feels, fixed upon her changeful face.

He allows her a few minutes,—minutes during which the Louis the Fourth clock upon the chimney-piece, seems, to nervous Flossie's ears, to tick with distressing loudness,—and then says, very gently,—

"Flossie, do you think you can forget for half an hour that I am a man but a few years older than your husband, and will

let me talk to you as if I were your father?"

"Indeed, yes," she says, eagerly; "you have always been so kind to me." And the too ready tears well up to her eyelids, as she lays her hand for a moment upon the arm which is within her reach.

"Well, then," he continues, cheerfully, "listen like a good girl, and take it all coolly while I say my say. In the first place, I suppose you know that my life is what people call a 'bad one'?"

He pauses a second or two for a reply, and then, taking silence for assent, and having a shrewd guess at the source whence Florence obtained her information, he pursues, quite calmly, as he leans back comfortably in his easy-chair, the subject for which his comprehensive question has cleared the way.

"You see the chances are very decidedly in favour of Atty's one day—a day that may not be very long delayed—filling my place here."

Almost before the last words had passed his lips, the cry of—"Oh, don't, please

don't say such things; it makes me so miserable to hear you!"—has broken from Flossie's sensitive heart, and the next moment she has flung herself on the rug at the kind speaker's feet, and is resting her clasped hands upon his knee.

"Don't say so. It *is* so hard!" she repeats, looking up into the worn face, in which the sufferings of the past week have wrought such visible havoc.

"*Hard!*" he says, musingly; "well, sometimes—often, indeed, I fear—it does seem to be hard lines that this beautiful world, and all that it contains,—I mean," with a short laugh, "that I am a cowardly, discontented fellow, Flossie. But to leave everything! Neelie, poor child, first and foremost, and then, though I have reached the ripe age of thirty-six, I don't somehow *feel* old—"

"Of course you don't. How should you? And you will get well, and strong; you know you have done so before, and—"

"Never *strong*," with a quiet shake of the head. "And—but enough of me and

my regrets, for I have matter more important, dear, to say to you. Yesterday—don't be horrified, dear, there is nothing death-watch-ish in the proceeding—I made a new will, and as you have a good deal to say, or rather to *do* with the provisions of the document, I should like, if you have no objection, to talk them over with you this morning."

Florence, who, notwithstanding her great regard, as well as pity, for her brother-in-law, would give much at this moment to be at the coverside, on a pulling horse, anywhere, in short, rather than *tête-à-tête* with Lord Uppingham, and on the point of listening to his last will and testament, mutters an incoherent assent, and he proceeds as follows.

"You are aware, perhaps," speaking with a certain hesitation, "that Arthur has been extravagant?"

Florence bows her blonde head assentingly.

"It will not, therefore, perhaps, surprise you that I should have what is called tied up

everything—everything, that is, in which I have the power to make a knot, as tightly as possible. The Uppinghams—as, of course, you know—come rather under the head of pauper peers; but there are acts of justice, the omission of which admit of no excuse, and among them is the remedying, as far as lies in my power, of the disgraceful neglect of your interests that was shown in your marriage settlements."

"But you are wrong, indeed you are! I have three hundred a year pin-money, and—"

"Nothing else. Flossie, *your* people ought to have been ashamed of themselves. You brought £70,000 into our poor exchequer, and it has been a simple act of duty on my part to see that the like sum is secured to you and to your younger children."

"But, Lord Uppingham—"

"Well, what have you to say against it? It will be *your* children, take my word for it, and not mine, who will make the old castle cheery with their gay young voices.

Ah, how long ago it is since there was a child at Somerford! My poor sister Lucy—you have never seen her, Florence, but she is worth your going out of your way to make her acquaintance—was but a little thing when my father died. I was eighteen when she was born, and six years afterwards she met with the accident that made her a cripple for life. Such a darling as she was! And how I—before she made her appearance on the stage of life—used, being of necessity, at that period of my existence, a poor, stay-at-home fellow, used to watch over, and make much of the best mother that ever a son had!"

"Did Arthur care as much as you did for his mother?" Florence, at this pause in Lord Uppingham's recollections, asks timidly.

"Perhaps so; I cannot say. Atty was peculiarly situated. For a long time—till I was nearly twenty, in short—he was almost justified in the belief (and it was one which I have since learned was, by many of the hangers-on and inferior retainers, very in-

dustriously confirmed) that *I* should never live to inherit my father's title. When events proved the fallacy of this premature conviction, it was, of course, hard upon Atty. Ideas which had grown with his growth had to be nipped in their more than bud, and, worse evil still, habits of profuse expenditure had been formed, and—but, dear Flossie, perhaps I am going too far. You are a very young wife, and it is for you to make for yourself unwilling discoveries, which I trust you will do your best, by sense and prudence, to neutralize."

He holds out his hand to her as he says the words, and Florence seeing, or fancying that she sees, a tired look on his pale, haggard face, rises from the rug, and, still holding the long, slender fingers, says, as she leans over "Upp's" big lounging chair,—

"You have been talking too much. You look in pain—is it your head?" and she lays her cool hand on his forehead soothingly.

His answer is a pleasant smile as he looks

up into the sweet young face, which blushes crimson at the words which follow.

"Thanks, no; pain is over for the present. But I won't keep you, dear, in this dull room. Take care of yourself. Remember that I trust to you. The next heir is a very distant cousin, an Irish branch of the family; and though I know nothing against Bernard St. George, I confess to a strong desire to retain, not only the Marquisate, with which he, as a collateral, would have nothing to do, but pure English blood in the veins of the Lords of Uppingham."

He held her hand in his till he had done speaking, and then Florence, glad to escape, hurried from the room, to think over all that had been said, and on the new duties and responsibilities which her brother-in-law's words had opened out before her.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT this time, and whilst Somerford Castle is redolent of the life and spirits with which the "fast" American girls (encouraged to the top of their bent by young Lord Flintshire, who has joined the party, and by Lord Arthur, whose admiration of Geraldine, the younger of the "Yankee gals," as "Flint," in smoking-room talk, has dubbed them, is very "marked") are rather astonishing the worthy, but somewhat slow-going families in the neighbourhood, Frank Chamberlayne writes the following letter to his friend, Hartley Vane:—

"MY DEAR HARTLEY,—I ran up to London directly I received your letter, and by good luck found my uncle at home, and, which was better fortune still, in the humour to answer questions. After listening patiently

to a *quantum suff.* of Club gossip,—in which Othello's soul, since his more legitimate 'occupation's gone,' has taken much delight, —I craftily introduced the subject in which, for your sake, I take an especial interest; but I greatly fear that you will not consider the result of my explorations into this *terra incognita* to be, even in a small degree, satisfactory. As regards the marriage between the mother of Lord Arthur St. George's first wife and Mr. Bloxholme, of which Mrs. Blunt speaks, you say, so positively as valid, I can only learn that, on the occasion when my uncle accepted the disagreeable duty of breaking to Mrs. Blunt the fact that she was doomed to retire on a pension which she, of course, considered as highly incommensurate to her deserts, the Didone, drowned in tears (she was still, according to uncle George's account, an attractive woman), swore to him, by all which she held sacred, —*id est*, her life and soul and honour,—that a letter which Mr. Bloxholme had, on the occasion of their having "crossed the Border" together, written to her, was proof positive,

if only it were forthcoming, of her being lawfully a wife.

"'And upon my soul,' continued my uncle, 'I think that the poor creature believed she spoke the truth; and what makes me think so the more is, that old Bloxholme, though I pressed him pretty hard on the subject, could not bring himself to absolutely deny the assertion which the cast-off one had made. He hummed and hawed and shuffled about it so, that I really began to suspect, and do so still, that there *was* something in it after all."

When Frank has written thus far, he lays down his pen and begins to turn over in his mind certain *pros* and *cons* connected with the subject on hand. It is a question with him whether or not he shall disclose to Hartley some remarks, not very pleasing to a lover's ear, which the old cynic made use of regarding the lovely object of Mr. Vane's adoration. For a few minutes he leans back in his chair, doubtingly. Common sense, as well as the experience of life and of human nature, which, both inside and outside his

profession, he has gained, are in favour of openness. No means which could, by any possibility, weaken the influence which this pernicious Lizzie has obtained over his friend's heart and fancy ought, in Frank's opinion, to be neglected; but then, on the other hand, he remembers, not only that to be persecuted is often to be strong, but that the chances are not, after all, greatly in favour of Hartley's abandoning the girl he loves for the simple reason that her putative father (without the excuse of "strongly loving") suspected the fidelity of the woman to whom she owed her birth.

"Poor old fellow! let us leave him his illusions," Frank, as he, with rather unnecessary haste, seizes his pen, says to himself; "the disease has taken too strong a hold on his constitution for anything short of desperate remedies to cure it. These are beyond my power to apply, and therefore I must leave him to be miserable, I fear, poor old boy; for this confounded girl, if she is the beauty he describes her to be, won't let him off easily, I'll be bound."

After this unspoken soliloquy is at an end, Mr. Chamberlayne concludes his letter as follows:—"The Arthur St. Georges are here: *she* not improved in any way since her marriage; he—but I won't sully my third and 'virgin page' by even the faintest allusion to the goings on of Free Americans and their admirers. Lord Uppingham is better—out of the wood, the doctors seem to think, for the present; so that the 'fun' here, considering the limited numbers that are, with the sole purpose, as far as I can see, of 'getting drunk with *excitement*, wherein is excess,' assembled together, is — what the Misses Callvert suggestively call—'rather' fast and furious. How I dislike, as it is now in female slang misused, that conjunction of words—'rather fun!' And then the senseless giggle, the tremendously expensive as well as hideously disfiguring dress, the absence of any attempt at rational conversation, 'all these things are against' the matrimonial chances of such penniless young beings as, I imagine, these Yankee fair ones to be. The fair Geraldine is, however, to do her only justice, a very

wondrous work of art — rare as Gibson's painted Venus, and possessed of an amount of natural beauty, which forcibly reminds one of the passage in Shakspeare that treats of the absurdity in such matters of works of supererogation."

Hartley Vane read this letter with strong interest and very close attention. Being naturally of an investigating turn of mind, he could not but be struck by the entire absence, in Frank's business-like despatch, of any allusion to the consequences, necessarily of a disastrous description which must, in the event of Mrs. Blunt's marriage proving no delusion of her brain, accrue to Lady Arthur St. George. Hartley was the more struck by this omission, for the reason, first, that Florence was on the spot in her *braverie* as a bride, and therefore could hardly fail to be pre-eminently an object of attention; and, secondly, because of the legal habits of thought with which Frank's mind, he being sincerely devoted to his profession — was thoroughly imbued.

"I wish he had said more about Lady

Arthur; it might have amused Lizzie," Hartley says to himself, as he puts the letter into his pocket, and, thus laden, sallies forth to meet his "love."

CHAPTER V.

FRANK CHAMBERLAYNE and Florence are sitting apart from the rest in the large old-fashioned looking drawing-room at Somerford, talking about "taste" and the oracles thereof. The gentlemen (there has been a large dinner-party, at which Lord Uppingham has been a very silent president) have but recently joined the ladies, some of whom had yawningly, and others gigglingly (it was simply an affair of temperament) awaited the event. Florence, whose powers of "chaff" were limited, and whose heart and vanity were growing very sore by reason of the "punishment" which Geraldine Callvert's bright eyes and reckless tongue had the power to inflict, had conveyed herself "anywhere, anywhere, out of the *way*" of witnessing the "desperate" flirtation carried on, after a fashion that not a little

scandalized the grey-haired butler, between her husband and the girl, who, provided that she amused herself, cared not one jot or tittle what suffering she inflicted on another.

Frank Chamberlayne, being one of those rare young men whose life and trains of thought are governed and influenced by the early learned laws of probity and honour, had never, since the day when Florence Bloxholme had pledged herself to be Lord Arthur's wife, *allowed* his imagination to stray towards the image of the girl he had once hoped to call his own. That he was always successful in effectually suppressing the longings, envyings, and such like, which will, under the like circumstances, well up in the peccant human heart I cannot say; but truant Fancy was not permitted by this young barrister to take *le monde aux dents*. He felt no pleasure, but the contrary (in short, he would have felt, had he so acted, like a villain), in "nursing his *love* to keep it warm"; and yet there were moments—rare and exceptional ones—when, being off his guard, the memory of what *might* (had not that "handsome scoun-

drel" carried all before him) have been *his* happy lot, rose up before him, and, the sight of Flossie's fresh young prettiness being, of this weakness of his mortal nature, the existing cause, poor Frank had on those occasions some little difficulty in "standing upright."

He is sitting now on a low ottoman by Flossie's side, and has just concurred with her in the remark that, to erect, on the basis of individual opinion, a standard of "Taste," from which all who differ are supposed to be deficient in what we most of us arrogate to ourselves as a prized and inherent gift, is a tyranny to which it is surprising, seeing how vain a thing is man, that he should so unresistingly submit.

"And it is the same thing with the ancient axioms which we are apt to accept as oracles, from the mere fact that some important personage, little dreaming that his dictum would descend to, and perhaps do some little harm to, generations yet unborn, had in a thoughtless moment given voice to—"

"And *why* things and sayings, and people and music, are to be called wonderful,

and clever, simply because they have been pronounced to be so by some old fellow with a knock-me-down manner, which makes meeker people afraid of him has always puzzled me. I know myself—now, Mr. Chamberlayne, *do* confess that you understand and have gone through the feeling—that I have been afraid to express admiration, say of a picture, or statue, or anything else, till some acknowledged judge has told me what to say."

Frank, after confessing to a sympathetic weakness, is about to add something on the inconveniences attendant on moral cowardice, when Florence breaks in with—

"Oh, Mr. Chamberlayne, I want you so to tell me something, you who know so much of what is going on, what people say—"

"What a character! The male gossip of the Clubs! But I am ready to listen, and only hope, after such a flattering exordium, that I shall not disappoint your expectations."

"Oh, it is nothing—indeed it is not—of any great importance."

"I thought not; something small and light, precisely suited to my capacity—"

"Oh, please not to laugh, for, though it is not important to any one else, it is to me. I want to know whether you think I ought to—to make any stand about not receiving the Callverts in London. They seem so—so reckless; and Helen St. George wrote to me to be careful—"

"Well, if you do me the honour of asking my advice, I too should say, *be* careful; but, at the same time, be tactful. Do not show them, dear Lady Arthur,—for they are not worth the trouble which it takes to make an enemy,—that you are keeping them at arm's length."

"I think I understand; and thank you so much for advising me. But about this plan which vexes dear old Lady Uppingham and Helen so much?—the determination, I mean, of the Callverts to have dear little Rhoda to act in the play they are getting up?"

"I can understand Lady Uppingham's objections; but if Lord Arthur has none—"

"Oh, but he *would* have, I think, if the case were properly put to him. The doctor who attends Rosie could easily say—"

With an eagerness which almost amounts to incivility, Frank breaks in upon her speech,—

"For Heaven's sake!" he exclaims, "mind, dear Lady Arthur, what you are about. Don't—pardon an old friend for saying this—take the first step in manœuvring, which, though urged to do so by the very best of purposes, so often leads to mischief. If the doctors—whose aid is so often *privately* evoked against a husband's will—were to reveal their budget of experiences, it would be, I fear, a melancholy record enough."

Lady Arthur, conscious of error, yet not altogether liking to be reproved, endeavours, a little awkwardly, to turn the subject with a laugh.

"I thought," she says, "that you rather disclaimed my accusation, as you called it, of being behind the scenes. However, in this also I will take your advice, thanking you again for it; for indeed, *indeed*," very earnestly, and with her large blue eyes beginning to be dimmed with tears, "I often sorely need a word in season to be said to

me. But about little Rosie and this play. You see, Miss Callvert, as a sort of form, I suppose, asked me first whether they could reckon on the poor little dot's taking the fairy's part, and I answered most emphatically 'No!'"

"Without even a passing thought that from your decision there might possibly be an appeal?"

"Exactly. This happened three days ago; and as I do not happen to have the same rage for private theatricals as possesses some of my friends—"

"Meaning me, for instance, eh?" Frank, who being one of the best amateur performers going, laughingly asks.

"Well, yes; I should say that *you* are one of those who are a little mad upon the subject. I confess to not being able to understand the taste. Women must look so horrid near, with all that dreadful paint close under their eyes. And then the familiarity—the—oh, Mr. Chamberlayne, I am quite sure that *you* do not like *that* part of private theatricals, whatever else you may do!"

She is silent, expecting an answer, which is slow in coming, to her somewhat suggestive question. In truth, she cannot imagine ("light in hand," and entertaining, though Frank Chamberlayne habitually is) the same Frank finding himself quite at home, and altogether the right man in the right place, in the imitation "green-room" of a country house. She looks at his thoughtful face,—the thoughtfulness stamped on which is deepened as the piano in the adjoining room striking up a lively waltz and the sound of rushing feet proclaim the fact that, even as had been the case on the previous night, dancing was the order of the hour.

What is passing through Frank's mind it would be hard to say, as, without looking up, or removing his hand from the chin on which it rests, he quietly quotes the grand old poet's words:—

> "There is a pleasure in being mad
> Which only madmen know."

And then, in the same musing way, he listlessly, to all appearance, adds, "What an

amusement it would be to inoculate you with some of my Midsummer madness. There are some characters which you would look to perfection. The women are often such wretched sticks!"

A bright flush of colour—a flush with which hurt feeling has almost entirely to do—passes over Flossie's transparent face at his words; for she has not forgotten that in a recent conversation held by her with Frank on the subject of amateur acting, he had said that rather than see wife or sister of *his* on the boards of any theatre, however private, he would hail with satisfaction her *début* behind a counter.

Her first impulse is to remind her interlocutor of his previously expressed, and very adverse opinion; but a feeling, which she does not attempt to analyze, arrests the words on her lips, and she merely says, with rather a bitter little laugh,—

"Thanks, very much, but I have no ambition in that line. I can understand that *you* may like being a walking gentleman, a *jeune premier*—"

"*Cela dépend*," he says, lightly. "The elder Callvert might be rather nice to act with, but the sister—"

"Oh, Miss Jerry is *too* horrid! So loud and so forward."

"Exactly. But you have given her high praise as an actress, *sous entendu*. If the fair Jerry were not loud, the audience would not hear her, and a backward young lady *on* the stage had better, in my opinion, be *off* it."

"I dare say. Nay, I am sure you are right. I don't pretend to understand such things. However, I should not think that Lady Uppingham, who has the entire care of Rosie, would approve of *her* acting."

"I dare say not. If I were the child's grandmother—which, thank God, I am not—I would veto the proposal at once. They say the poor little thing is not strong, and certainly she grows wonderfully like her mother."

"Did you know Lady Arthur well?" Florence asks, and the blush which accompanies the question is not lost upon Frank.

"She must have been very pretty, poor thing! if Rosie is like her."

"Yes, she was pretty, certainly. Not that *I* ever ranked among her great admirers. There was a *pinched* look—if you understand what I mean—about her face, her nose especially, which I thought a great take off from her beauty."

"And she was always delicate, was she not? The kind of look which you describe, generally goes with a tendency to ill health."

"I cannot tell. I knew very little of Miss Wyngate. She often paid long visits to an old aunt of mine who lives in Hertfordshire; but Belwood Grange, the name of my aunt's little place, never had—dear, good old soul though she was—much attraction for me; nor do I exactly remember whether or not she was known to the world in general as an heiress then."

"It is singular," mused Florence, "that she, having been so much with a relation of my father's—"

"A far-off relation, was it not? *You* are

no "near frind," as the Irish peasants say, to the Allnutts?"

"None whatever. The truth is, that I am almost destitute of 'near frinds,' and the being so often makes me feel melancholy. I have no one who has a right—I mean," blushing, "whose duty it is—to—to care for me. I do so envy people who have sisters and brothers, close relations, who—"

"May be 'more than kin, and less than kind.' And when those upon whom you have a natural claim for affection and sympathy fail in what you call their duty, the dereliction more than counterbalances the possession of such doubtfully advantageous possessions."

Whilst they are speaking, the dance has grown more rapid, the laugh more loud and frequent, the music more exciting. Into the hitherto comparatively quiet room in which Lady Arthur and Frank are seated, the invading couples enter with a whirling rush; and one, consisting of Lord Arthur and daring Lady Westhampton, who is amongst the latest arrived guests at Somer-

ford, twirl so near to Florence, that the multitudinous trimmings of her dress float up to that indignant young woman's face.

"Another of your actresses," she says, indignantly. "I have not seen one woman who goes in for that kind of thing that is not detestable."

"But, possibly, they may have counterbalancing merits. However, I give up Lady Westhampton to your tender mercies, and admit her to be one of the most systematically rude, impertinent persons I am acquainted with."

"And yet you like them all so much!"

"How do you know I like them 'so much'?"

"You are for ever going to their house, for one thing."

"And I was once for *ever*, as you call it, going to other people's houses too. Do you suppose—"

"Oh," she said, a little impatiently, "I suppose you like everybody, then? Ah, there is Lord Flintshire. *He* is always civil; and do you know, Mr. Chamberlayne,

that on the whole I think I rather like civil people best."

Frank bows politely, and the next moment is being petted and made much of by the bold, laughing, handsome woman who somehow contrived, although circumstances were a good deal against her, to be on the top of the particular tree, to the summit of which she had, very early in her career, aspired.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. VANE received her son's confidential account of the rise and progress of his love affair with unmixed feelings of sorrow and dismay. That the beloved son, whose calamity had from his birth so inexpressibly endeared him to her heart, and who was now —for three years had elapsed since Gilbert had given signs of life—apparently her all in all, should, for the space of many months (months during which she was inly conscious that he had changed), have kept to himself an all-important secret, had been to the mother a grievous revelation. But, silent and reticent as he had lately been, she had brought herself to hope that there was in reality but little cause for anxiety, when, ah me! there suddenly sprang up before her the sense of lessened love!—love diminished by the precise amount thereof which was now

given to another! Take so much from the whole, whether the "much" is lavished on self or any other object, and with the remainder those who crave for the whole must be content.

But, in addition, and in sore aggravation to this great and very natural cause for sorrow, there was the conviction upon Mrs. Vane's perhaps slightly biassed mind that the object of Hartley Vane's devotion was, even if not in herself unworthy, at least surrounded by those that were so. That the girl came of an unclean stock seemed certain; and therefore, howsoever great might be the beauty of person which Lizzie Blunt could boast, she was, in mind and heart, no fitting wife for Hartley—no fitting daughter for his mother.

They had sat for some time in silence, the widow gazing into the fire with sad, wistful eyes—the eyes of a loving, tender woman, who is beginning to realize the fact that Death and Time—the "changes and chances of this mortal life," in short—have for her taken from that life both its sweetness and its salt; and he, restless, after the manner of his age, crossing now this leg and then the

other, and with his arm thrown over the back of his chair, looking with impatient anger at the mother, who, absorbed in her own thoughts—her own regrets, has no word to say to *him* in his sore distress.

At last he speaks.

"Mother, I dare say I was a fool to tell you this; but who is not a fool sometimes? And then I thought *you* must know something of women's hearts and feelings, and you might be able—in short, mother, I am just the most miserable wretch upon the face of God's earth; and if I had been smothered—as I have been told is the case with many a monster that is brought into the world—the kindness to me would have been great indeed."

A groan, which she cannot altogether restrain, breaks from the sorely-tried woman's lips. In the twinkling of an eye, all that for long years—from the moment of his birth, but especially since the time when he ceased to be an "infant," and could walk with her abroad—she had suffered for *him*, flashed through her mind. The torture which the

sight of inquisitive looks cast upon her darling had been such as only a mother can conceive; and then those sad forebodings for his future—the future of a man whose misfortune might entail upon him that grievous one to the young and passionately-loving, of bestowing his heart in vain,—all this and more also, had caused the sacrifices which Mrs. Vane had made for her first-born son to seem light in the balance, when weighed against the woe which she had patiently, and within the confines of her own breast, endured for Hartley.

And now to hear him say that it would have been better for him had he died! Truly a thankless child! But then—but then,—it is woman's vocation to endure in silence, man's to give vent loudly to his sufferings. And he *must* be suffering, that poor boy of hers, for that dreadful thought even to have crossed his mind; so, the next moment (these thoughts, like unto a dream, which, when, after a few seconds' sleep, we wake from it, seems to have endured for hours, had not taken long in the thinking

thereof) she answered him with a full heart thus,—

"My boy, you forget. You never told me of your grief. How could I guess that—that—"

"I had no more chance of winning a girl's love than has any other *object* who intrudes himself offensively on her sight. Mother, you *know* I have not!" looking with such eager inquiry into her eyes that *hers* fill with tears, as she answers,—

"No, dear, I do not know it. Had *I* been a young girl, and you loved me, I should have thanked both God and you for the boon He gave me."

He turns from her impatiently. The contrast between her loving, flattering words, and the drear reality is too painful. Then he says,—for the impatience was but momentary, and the smile the mother loves so well lights up for a brief second the son's handsome face,—

"Dear old mother, if every woman saw me with your eyes, I should become, I think, the most conceited fellow under

the sun. But, though *the* woman certainly declines to do so, there is no reason, dear, why you should not love and be kind to Lizzie. I shall try and make her wish to come and see you, and then I shall feel sure that she, poor child, has found a friend."

There were tears in his eyes as he kissed the care-lined forehead tenderly; and then, taking up his hat, he walked out into the half-deserted street, leaving a bitter pill for the good, proud woman inside to swallow.

For who, she could not but ask herself, was this Lizzie Blunt, whose visit was to be made a favour of, and whom she, Mrs. Vane, was so *sure* to take to as a friend? A girl of doubtful birth, disreputable surroundings, or she would not so persistently have refused to permit "poor, deluded Hartley" to judge of them for himself, and, Mrs. Vane doubted not, imprudent, not to say reckless, conduct. Truly, the woman who had once held her head so high had come to a poor pass, when a girl so situated was to be

entreated—and, perhaps, in vain—to become her visitor!

Poor mother! That it was all for her boy's sake was the only thought in which, for such mortification, she found both a cause and a consolation!

CHAPTER VII.

ALL this time Lord Arthur showed no positive signs of lack of kindness to Florence. He did not even, to outward appearance, neglect, in regard to her, the usual observances which, in civilized life, are required of the "well bred"; but being ingrain a self-indulgent man, and the very small amount of *feeling* which he had ever experienced for poor Florence having completely waned, he allowed himself, without even a momentary struggle against the temptation which so easily beset him, to be beguiled by Geraldine Callvert's lavishly displayed loveliness, and by the cajoleries which no good woman condescends to employ as a weapon, into a complete forgetfulness of all claims, save hers, upon his affections; whilst, as to conjugal duty! Miss Geraldine, in love herself, and jealous after her fashion, had flatteringly commanded

him to let that alone, *quoad* the wife, whose wealth had saved him from outlawry—for ever!

And Florence, too proud to remonstrate, and moreover beginning to see no longer "through a glass darkly," but "face to face" with facts, the man whose worth she had so rashly taken upon trust, opened her eyes to facts, and, woman-like, strove with smiles—even as we strew flowers over our beloved dead—to cover the ashes of the past, that was, in its delusive brightness, gone for ever! And Frank Chamberlayne, who, being far from perfect, had, for the reason that she had preferred shallow Lord Arthur to himself, had his opinion of Florence considerably lowered, watched the awakening to the truth and the inward battle which womanly fortitude enabled her to fight so successfully, and with a heart whose rejoicing ought to have put him on his guard, restored her to her place in his esteem.

"That is one of the nicest young fellows I know," Lord Uppingham, speaking of Frank, says one day to Florence. "Full of intellect,

without an atom of priggishness, and, though sure of himself, as little bumptious as it is possible for a young man to be."

Florence has just allowed that Mr. Chamberlayne is "very nice," and agreed with the master of the house in regretting that the young barrister's visit had drawn to a close, when "Neelie," in wild spirits, and flushed with the fire of jokes and chaff which had made the atmosphere of the billiard-room such as few ladies (save those who, like the Callverts, were thoroughly acclimatized to such a moral atmosphere) could stand, rushes, panting for breath, into the room.

A footman has just placed a brightly-burning lamp on the table, the light of which falls full on Florence's fair young face. "Neelie" is only two years her senior, but already the first "freshness of morning" has in her case faded away; and the American "great" lady, pretty as she still incontestably is, has at twenty-two been driven to find in Art a substitute for Nature.

Her ladyship, who is slightly given to demonstrativeness, throws herself on the

settee by her husband's side, and, passing her arm through his, says, with a laugh,—

"I am come to scold Flossie, there—a real, hearty scold. Why didn't you tell me (only fancy Upp, dear, her not doing so?) that you are going to Brighton next week; that" (nodding her blonde head, and scoring off the several items on her fingers) "you are to have a house in Brunswick Terrace, next door but one to the Callverts; that—stop, please, you shall have *your* say when *I* have done—you are to lend your augustcountenance to the performance of the French play, and perhaps—*ça dépend*—act in it yourself. Rhoda is to be brought to Brighton—"

"My dear Neelie!" Lord Uppingham, at this wholly unexpected climax, breaks in, "you are talking nonsense. Begging your pardon, now, it was only this morning that you saw my mother's letter—the letter in which she announced her intention of refusing to let the child be made use of in this way; and besides—"

He is interrupted by the entrance of Frank Chamberlayne, who is going by a late after-

noon train to London, and has come to say good-bye to those whom he is about (in one instance, at least, with a pitiful unwillingness) to leave behind him.

Lady Uppingham, in her eager way, claims for herself his attention.

"So you really *are* going? I am *so* sorry; and just, too, when Greek is going to meet Greek, for Geraldine and Florence have a difference of opinion—"

"I beg your pardon, Cornelia," says Lady Arthur, rising from her chair, and speaking with an outward composure that nearly approaches to haughtiness, albeit the timid heart within is beating fast and painfully,—"I beg your pardon for contradicting you, but as Miss Callvert's opinions are a matter of perfect indifference to me—"

"Oh, my dear child, don't, for Heaven's sake, take everything so dreadfully *au sérieux*. How *will* you get on in this chaffing, mocking, care-for-nothing, solemn world of ours if you do? But I'm sorry I vexed you; I didn't mean to, dear." And the good-hearted little goose puts her arm round

Flossie's neck, and kisses her. "You are worth a thousand Jerrys—isn't she Upp? I needn't ask *you*," to Frank, who, to save himself from looking foolish, blurts out a premature reply.

"Of course not, Lady Uppingham, or that of any one else, I should think, who has the pleasure of knowing Lady Arthur St. George," —and having so said, he, with a short laugh of civility, shakes hands, and makes, in dramatic parlance, a very tolerable exit.

Nevertheless, and although pleased with himself for the self-command and readiness of resource which had saved *him*, and, consequently, Florence, from the embarrassment attendant on a false position, Frank's brow was clouded, and his heart—the heart which he had deemed so safely guarded by the insurmountable barrier of Florence Bloxholme's marriage—was heavy within him. His eyes and ears had been of late far too intently on the watch for Lady Uppingham's words to contain news for him. That there was to be war to the knife between the New York beauty and Lady Arthur St. George—

the said war being one of very shameful aggression on the part of the former—he had plainly seen. And how, he asked himself, would it end? And in what way could *any*, even the most zealous, ally aid the weaker side, and bring the battle to a successful issue? Long and anxiously he thought, but reflection proved altogether vain. There were a thousand chances, at least, to one, against Florence; and any feeble influence which she might yet retain over the fickle, unprincipled man, who had sought her (and here I am sadly afraid that a "wicked word" was muttered by Frank's firmly set lips against his successful rival) for her wealth alone. There was nothing of the "determined" or the "dare all" woman about Lady Arthur. Had there been, Frank Chamberlayne, whose type of perfection was the gentle, the self-denying, and the unpretending, never could have set his heart on winning Flossie for his own. *Perhaps* he was deceived in her. Both men and women (like "youthful poets") fancy, "when they love," the qualities which they prize to be existent in the worshipped ones.

But, although Frank might have placed this open-hearted, unworld taught girl upon too high a pedestal, he was right in this—namely, that she was no match, in any way, for a woman of Geraldine Callvert's ample and well-worked resources. A momentary struggle she might make—even the gentlest creature existent *will* turn when trampled on; but in the end, the virtuous wife, the well-conducted sustainer of the man's name and honour, must be worsted, and the dust of humiliation would (as Frank with furious anger against Lord Arthur felt) be terribly bitter to the tongue which the heartless prodigal had made to taste it.

CHAPTER VIII.

SITTING at her window in the failing light, her knitting-pins (she is finishing a lambs-wool stocking for Hartley) making, as they click against each other, the silence in the quiet room one that can be *felt*, Mrs. Vane, on the day following that in which a fresh field for suffering has been opened out to her, is pondering on her own blindness in that she had never suspected—never imagined even—the possibility that love, which in this mutable world of ours is at the bottom of so much mischief, might be working both for him and for her this grievous trial.

"I never thought that he would have a secret unshared by his poor mother," she has just said to herself, when a ring at the house-door bell arrests her attention.

Who can it be? She has so few visitors—*none*, she might almost say; but before she

has time to cogitate further on the matter, the door opens, and the servant announces that a young person—"quite a poor girl," she adds in a lower tone—has called to see Mr. Vane.

"Mr. Vane? Are you sure, Sarah? And a 'poor girl,' you say?" asks, in a hurried, flustered manner, the usually quiet-toned mistress of the house.

"Yes'm," answers Sarah, who has had an education, and uses upper-class words; "and she says it's very urgent. That a person down at their place is dying, and wants to see master first."

"But he is not at home—Mr. Vane is out. Did you tell the girl so, Sarah? If so, say it again, and let her leave a message. I—I do not like people I don't know anything of hanging about the house."

In a few minutes, Sarah, whose own curiosity had been stimulated to the extent of asking the "poor girl" a few leading questions, returns with the information that the "party" has left, but had previously announced her intention of walking up and

down before the house in hopes of "catching Mr. Vane a-coming in."

"I think 'm as she comes from Westminster way, and they 're terrible poor in them low places," Sarah adds; and she is closing the door, when her mistress calls her back.

"Stay, Sarah; I think I will see the poor creature. It may be," hesitatingly, "about some law business. Call her in, will you be so good?" and having so said, Mrs. Vane reseats herself—"all of a tremble," as Sarah would say—upon her chair beside the window.

She has not long to wait. The girl in the battered bonnet and slip-shod boots had not progressed many yards, and soon stands, all agape, and ready to be questioned, in the pretty room, with its neatly carpeted floor, with which her appearance is in sad and singular contrast.

"You have come, I think, to see Mr. Vane? He is not at home," Mrs. Vane says, gently; "but if I can give any message—. Ah, there is my son's step. Now you can speak to him yourself,"—and, feeling a good deal relieved,

but anxious still, the widow waits in silence the solution of the mystery.

Hartley, who has effected an entrance with his latch-key, walks, without a pause, into his mother's presence, and is greeted, to his utter astonishment, by eager words, from an unfamiliar tongue

"Oh, sir, please—I promised—she said, when she giv'd me the note, as no one was to have it but you. You are, Mr. Vane, sure? She said the gentleman had but one arm, but its dark a'most, and—"

"Oh, I am the gentleman. Don't you see?" impatiently turning his left side towards the girl. "And now give the note, if you have one, and wait outside. I will speak to you there."

The girl hesitates no longer: probably she had only delayed in order to prolong a scene in which she found herself so unexpected an actress, and Hartley, taking the note to the fire, reads it by the flickering light.

It is, as he felt certain, from Lizzie, and contains but these few lines:—

"My mother is dying. I have no friend

but you. For pity's sake, and if the words you said to me were true, come to me at once."

During the reading (which was not the work of a moment) of these hurriedly written words, Mrs. Vane had drawn down the blinds, and lighted the taper which stood upon the writing-table. The idea that her boy might wish her also to read the ill-written missive prompted her to the act, and the result proved that she was not mistaken.

"Mother, dear," Hartley says, striving, good fellow that he is, not to feel too much rejoiced at *any* event, however calamitous, which draws him near to the object of his worship, "this note is from *her*—read it, please. She can write better than this, poor child; but I must go to her now. See, there is no date! She has forgotten everything in her distress; but the girl outside will know," and with rapid steps he is going out to question her, when Mrs. Vane follows quietly, and with her hand upon his arm, whispers,—

"Hush! Be prudent. Call her here. If you wish it, I will leave the room."

"Mother! How can you? You who know all!" he says reproachfully. And in another moment Lizzie's messenger is, within closed doors, telling all she knows.

"You 'll easy find the place. It 's writ up, though it ain't much more than what folks calls a 'court.' Mrs. Blunt, she lives with her daughter on the first floor, and Miss Lizzie, she as sent me, was good to mother when she had the spasms, or I wouldn't have come 'ere to-night, for she 's awful proud, is Miss Lizzie. 'Olds her 'ead as 'igh as if she was a duchess."

"And you have heard, perhaps, some particulars — I mean, you know what is the matter with Mrs. Blunt?" Hartley, as he hastily dons his greatcoat, says.

"I 'eard as it was some sort of a fit," rejoins the girl; "but that seems queer, too, for she wasn't stouter nor an 'erring. Thank you 'm, yer very kind," dropping a curtsy in return for the half-crown which Mrs. Vane had put into her hand, and then vanishing, together, with the "one-armed gentleman," whose guide she was to be, from the room.

"Poor little wretch! How oddly she talked! And I could almost fancy she smelt of spirits! They say the poor begin so early! But there must be some good in her—some gratitude. And that unhappy girl! It *seems* all true, and natural and nice, and yet men are so easily deceived! A clever woman who is not a wife—*their* wife, at least—can twist them round her little finger! And then the mystery! Poor, darling Hartley's hopeless love, which all this pity, because he *is* good, must infallibly augment! Oh! how from my heart I wish that he had never seen her face!"

Whilst these and similar thoughts are rapidly passing through the widow's troubled mind, Hartley and the strange "*cab* fellow," with whom "misery has made him acquainted," are proceeding, at the best pace at which a Hansom can, with due regard to the safety of Her Majesty's lieges, be driven towards the home which Hartley has never (in spite of stubborn facts, of mended gloves, of well-patched little boots, and other signs of poverty that poor Lizzie's dress displayed) been able to imagine as wholly out of character with

the beauty and grace, the natural refinement, and last, not least, the *deserts* of lovely Lizzie Blunt.

Far enough had the girl been from intentionally deceiving him, and yet her shrinking from any revelations of a kind that might tend to his disenchantment was so great, that, without plan or purpose, she had allowed a concealing veil to fall over much that, in the two small rooms she called her home, would, as she instinctively felt, have struck Hartley Vane as not only unseemly in itself, but out of keeping with the ideal surroundings with which men of refinement and delicacy, frame, as it were, the idols of their fancy.

Between Hartley and his companion, no words, since they left the river-side cottage, had been spoken. The former, partly in self-defence,—for the aroma of dirt and rags, and something worse, it is to be feared, besides, hung disagreably about this blighted specimen of lower London girlhood,—had lighted his cigar, and after the courteous inquiry of "Have you any objection?" which Hartley

was, even in the case of a beggar woman, too true a gentleman to omit, the strangely brought together pair lapsed into silence.

Directions, which he seemed perfectly capable of understanding, had been given, before they started, to the cabman, and in due time—sooner, indeed, than Hartley had expected, for it did, indeed, seem strange that the home of which he had thought and dreamed so much could be reached (so near was it to his own) in little more than twenty minutes—the cab stopped at a narrow entrance-way,—a *lane*, in fact which, though there were numbered houses on both sides thereof, was impassable for any kind of carriage.

"Which is the house?—the number?" Hartley, almost breathless with eagerness, asks, as he springs from the cab, of the girl, who is already on the pavement by his side.

"Thirty-three. On the right side, sir,—nigh the end."

He places money, far more than he can afford to give, into her hand, and then, through the fog which is beginning to wrap all London

in an unwholesome shroud, he rapidly makes his way towards the direction indicated by his guide. Excepting at the two extremities, there was no gas-light in Wallington Row, and it was only by close observation that the numbers could be discovered. Hartley, however, ran no risk of mistaking his goal, for close on his rapid footsteps followed the female Arab, who, as they neared the house, round the door of which a small crowd had assembled, reminded him of her existence by the exclamation of, "Here we are, sir, and, Laws me! there's the doctor a-coming out!"

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH the crowd—not a dense one, and consisting chiefly of women and children—Hartley pushed, rudely, as it seemed to the assembled gossips, who, moreover, credited the new-comer—and this for the simple reason that his dress was that of a gentleman—with that insolent intention of riding over them rough-shod, which the "lower orders" are so unfortunately ready both to expect and to resent. And so—as the man whose own sensitiveness was so acute that he never forgot the duty of *not* wounding by word or look the feelings of another, ran in his nervous haste upstairs—a laugh of derision, a youthful jeer from the *gamins* in the crowd, bore witness to the fact that, dim as was the light, the personal disfigurement of "Miss Lizzie's young man" had made itself, to those young vengeful spirits, only two plainly apparent.

For a moment—his "deformity" being, as we know, his weak point—the sting of that vulgar laugh, heralding, as it did, his advent, stuck very sharply into the thin skin of poor Hartley's sadly deficient *morale;* there was that before him, however, which, by annihilating self-consciousness, rendered him impervious to such pin-pricks as the "laughter of the foolish" has power to inflict.

It is up a very narrow staircase, uncarpeted, save by a dirty strip of *drugget*, and lighted by a flaring tallow candle, which, balanced on an angle in the stair-rails, has been left unheeded by the individual who had volunteered to "light the doctor down," that Hartley takes his way. On the first landing he pauses, and, after a moment's hesitation, taps softly at the nearest of the two doors, both of them alike suggestive of long neglect and misusage, which he sees before him. It is opened at once, and the face of Lizzie Blunt, pale and changed, but still beautiful, greets his sight.

She holds the door ajar with one hand,

whilst with the other she grasps his, saying, in broken accents,—

"Oh! thank you! How good you are! I felt sure that you would come!"

"*Come!* I should think so! Of what use am I, excepting to do your bidding?" And the hand he holds is pressed—not with a lover's passion, Death is too near, and Lizzie's face too full of woe, for *that*—to his heart, and to his lips.

"We need not whisper," gasps poor Lizzie. "She will never hear—never understand, the doctor says, again."

"My poor Lizzie! But she does not suffer? It is at least a painless end?"

"God knows! I cannot leave her, and yet—is it very wicked, very heartless?—I am afraid to stay with her alone."

"Poor child! But is there no one who—"

"*None;* they, the people about, are so coarse and low. I *could* not have them near me," and a shudder, which is wholly involuntary, passes visibly through her frame. "But," she adds hastily, "we must not stand talking here. This is a public stair-

case—a thing, I dare say, that *you* never heard of; and at any moment, on some pretence or other, people may come crowding up. Should you mind," timidly, "coming into the sitting-room? It is very comfortless. I have done nothing to it all the day," she says apologetically, as, taking the flaring candle from the banister, she precedes her visitor into the tiny front chamber, into which the adjoining bed-room opens.

"We shall hear poor mamma, if she *should* speak," Lizzie (after setting down the wretched light upon a table that is strewn with women's working materials, medicine bottles, and many another nameless *et cetera*) remarks. "Ah, what a long dreadful, *dreadful* day this one has been!" —and, throwing herself on a chair before the table, she rests her elbows thereon, and covers her dry, tearless eyes with her hands.

He, seated too, leans forward, as in soothing, gentle tones he speaks to her.

"*All* day, dear! And you never sent, till an hour ago, for me? Surely I had *some* right to be treated as a friend?"

Somehow—who can account for the strange turns and windings of the human heart?—the word jars upon her feelings, and, letting drop her hands, she answers coldly,—

"Yes, indeed, I know that you are all kindness, but you have often told me—as you may remember—that until five o'clock you were rarely to be found at home. I have done my best, you see," with a wan smile, "to test your friendship."

"Thanks, but now tell me—*do*, dear, as if I were your brother—how I can be of use to you. Is there *no* one to whom you could send? Your aunt? You have spoken to me more than once of her, and of her kindness to you ever since you can remember. Shall I send, or go to her for you?"

"She *knows*," the girl answers gloomily, for at that miserable moment she painfully recognizes the fact that to possess no living soul on whose protecting care a woman has a *rightful* claim, is to be alone and desolate indeed. "She knows, but she is bed-ridden, poor thing!—laid up with rheumatic gout—or—or I should not have been forced," and,

for a moment, a warm flush of colour tinges her pallid cheek, "to let you see how low, and mean, and miserable is the house I live in."

He does not know how to answer her. There is such bitterness in her tones, such angry fierceness in the eyes whose languid softness he had till now deemed so beautiful. He cannot understand how—with that awful struggle for life, the sound of which is dimly, but, oh! so painfully audible through the half-open door—the daughter of even a bad mother *can* have it in her to be careful and troubled about such small and trivial things as those which are clearly vexing Lizzie's spirit now; but, though he cannot understand, he feels for her, and—albeit he would hate himself were he to realize the truth that so it is—there is a soothing flattery in her care for his opinion, and her fears lest she should sink—by reason of her squalid surroundings—in his eyes, that warms his blood, lets in, where darkness was before, a flickering ray of hope, and somewhat interferes with that calm brotherly feeling to

which he had so lately told himself he had schooled his heart.

He is about to speak—he knows not what, but nonsense, probably—when Lizzie, speaking quite calmly now, arrests the words upon his lips.

"What a vain, heartless, wicked girl, I must appear to you!" she says; "and yet—if you knew all, which no one ever shall—Poor, helpless, dying mother! Have I done my best for you?" she murmurs on, as if communing with her own conscience, of the past. "Have I been forgiving, patient always, as I hope that others, and that He above, will pardon me, and be patient with *my* faults? Oh, Mr. Vane!" suddenly lifting up the glorious eyes, now glittering with unshed tears, to her companion's face, "if there is a grief on earth that may be called the lowest depth of suffering, it is to feel that when you *would* gladly say from the bottom of a repentant heart, 'I am sorry,' there is no ear to hear the words, no living tongue to say you are forgiven!"

Again, words with which to comfort the

self-reproachful girl are hard to find, but the mute caress of a hand softly resting, with a gentle pressure upon hers, is better a thousand times than stereotyped sentences of consolation, and, after a moment or two, Lizzie, making an effort to recover herself, says more quietly, but with a lip which quivers like that of a chidden child,—

"How silly it is of me to go on in this way! Crying and lamenting won't hinder what I have to say, which is this. Now please listen." (Such an absurd adjuration! As if every word that fell from her lips was not gathered up as though it were a diamond or a pearl, by the fond slave beside her.) "I shall be soon—God help me!—quite alone in the world, and when—when—she is gone, there will be many expenses which I cannot meet. That," laying down a sovereign and a few shillings on the table, "is all the money I have in the world. I have no one to help me. If *you* cannot, my poor mother must have a pauper's funeral; if you *can*, I will work—harder than I ever did before—to pay you what you will have lent me."

She had all but broken down. Only an ear stretched to the utmost could have taken in the sense of the last faintly uttered words; but Hartley, the "tenderest heart and next her own," both hears and understands.

"God bless you, precious one!" he says tenderly, and, for the first time, a tumult of conflicting feelings causes the eyes, on which his are gazing with such passionate intentness, to lower their long lashes before the unwonted fire. "I can, thank Heaven! do everything for you now. There is an old servant of my mother's, who," smiling, "is weak enough to think *me* perfect. I will bring her to you at once."

"Oh, no," clinging to his arm; "not a stranger. *You* will stay with me—I am *so* desolate," looking up with pleading eyes into the handsome bearded face which is (for they are both standing now) so near her own.

"Dear, I could not—my mother—I—"

"Ah, she is a woman, true and tender, and she would bid you not desert me in my trouble. I dread—I am afraid," and, trembling from head to foot, she flings her arms

upon his shoulders, and clings convulsively to his breast.

There is but one way—so whispers the voice of duty—in which to answer her, and this way, narrow and uninviting though it is, Hartley Vane, albeit his temples throb almost to bursting, and his broad breast heaves beneath the slender weight that rests on it, has strength to tread.

"Poor child, poor darling!" he says, smoothing with his strong right hand her ruffled hair, "you ask in your fresh innocence what I should be the most dishonourable among men were I to grant. You forget, dear, that though I am so disfigured, so cruelly treated by Nature as to be a laughing-stock to—well, love, even to the thoughtless crowd outside, that I am a man, that I am young—"

"And handsome, the handsomest man I ever saw,—the best, the—oh, my God!" and, suddenly clasping both hands across her forehead, the unhappy girl, overcome for the first time in her life by an *attaque de nerfs*, succumbs completely to its violence.

Her cries, mingled with laughter, speedily bring to the scene many of the eagerly awaiting curious ones; but Hartley, taking upon himself the control of affairs, permits no single intruder to enter the room, and, having sent in all haste for medical help, holds with tender force the writhing hands, speaking words of encouragement and comfort, which poor Lizzie — over wrought, and deprived for the nonce of all power of self-control—is totally incapable of appreciating.

CHAPTER X.

"You can do just as you please about going. I should be sorry to control *your* movements; but *I* have arranged to make tracks for Brighton on the seventh."

So speaks, without taking even the trouble to raise his eyes from the newspaper that he is ostensibly reading, the "lively," "agreeable" husband of Lady Arthur St. George, who, poor woman, having got ready her weapons for the fight, suddenly feels as though it were lost labour to gird them on. The utter "don't-carishness"—whether real or assumed, *she did not know him well enough* to judge—with which he met her timidly put forth objections to the Brighton plan, is almost more terrible than would have been angry vehemence to Florence. In a war of words there would have been, at the least, excitement. When roused to wrath

by wounded pride, cruel injustice, or what she knew to be a bitter wrong, Flossie could speak her mind with, perhaps, too exceeding openness; and she longed, but with a longing that was coupled with fear, to give voice to her opinion of the "horrid creature" whose shameless flatteries had produced on "Arthur" such a direful alteration for the worse. In her heart she utterly despised this "Jerry" with the ready tongue, who, with the aptness at catching up and throwing back a *double entendre* that is born of perfect boldness, was good at making silly men believe that they themselves were witty; and yet—and yet she was afraid of her!

"By George, what fun she is!" young Lord Flintshire, who, in the days before this Yankee syren's star rose high above the horizon, had been wont to think bright Flossie Bloxholme's harmless pleasantries well worth the laughing at, would complacently exclaim; and Flossie, who was only human, grudging to the girl whom she deemed (not unjustly) under-bred, and most unworthy, the attentions of *all* her "velvet friends" (for

even Frank had, on the last evening of his stay, seemed "taken up" with Jerry), would have given much for the strange power possessed by wicked women of making, on occasion, even the wise and well conducted, fools.

Before his sister-in-law's departure from Somerford, Lord Uppingham took occasion to address to her another word or two of warning.

"Forgive me, my dear Florence," he said, "if I seem officious; but, as I think I told you before, we are rather an impecunious family, and 'waste not want not' *ought* to be our motto."

"Thank you for reminding me," said Flossie, eagerly; "but, indeed, I hope there is no need. I have no taste for extravagance —at least, I think I have not; and I promise you that—"

"My child, you quite mistake my meaning: I was going to warn you, not against yourself, but against Arthur."

"Against Arthur? Oh, Lord Uppingham!"

"Yes, and with good reason, for, as far as

I can see, he has not changed one whit, and will soon be making on you demands for money which, on your part, it would be worse than madness to accede to. My advice to you then is to be *firm*. Without your consent it will not be in my brother's power to again peril his respectability in ways of which you, poor child, as yet know nothing. I wish with all my heart that the lawyers had been more careful of your tens of thousands; but as it is—well! we must hope the best, and I can only say again, be firm."

Neelie's farewell was very tearful. She had grown, in the three weeks which the St. Georges had spent at the castle, extremely fond of Florence, and reproached herself with open volubility for having done anything to vex so "sweet" and "dear" a creature.

"I'm sure if I could have only guessed what would happen, nothing would have induced me to ask the Callverts here," she says to Florence, whose laughing retort, that, so far as *she* knows, nothing *had* happened,

totally fails in producing the effect which the speaker desired. To silence Neelie was not, at any time, an easy matter, and now, for the ten minutes which remain before the servant would come to announce that all was ready, Lady Uppingham is "off at score."

"You see," she says emphatically, and nothing heeding Flossie's interpolation, "though I knew that they had met Arthur before, I had no idea of anything of *this* kind."

"But, my dear Neelie—"

"Ah! you are an angel, I know—much more of an angel than I should be; and that is what makes me so furious. Still, dear, if I were you, I would keep my ground. Not all the Jerrys in the world should put *me* down. As I told you before, dearest," (putting a beautifully adorned arm round the waist which is not quite so slim as when, at St. Peter's Church, poor Florence rashly took the marriage vow to "love and honour" *alway* the husband of her choice,) "you are worth a thousand Geraldines. It is only because you are his wife that Arthur does

not see it. Some men are so foolish! Ah! Time's up, is it? 'The dearest friends *must* part.' But you'll write to me, won't you, dear. And don't fret; you'll only," in a whisper, "have red eyes, and lose your beauty."

And thus, with on Neelie's side a fervent kiss, they parted. But so bright was the angry flush on Flossie's cheek, and so lustrous the gleam of her eyes, that Lord Arthur's curiosity was raised, and whilst, with man and maid behind, they were driven rapidly through the grand old park, and beneath giant beeches, golden with autumnal beauty, he asked his wife, with affected carelessness, what Lady Uppingham had been saying.

"Only," said Florence, thankful—for she had not had time to *cool*—for liberty of speech,—"only that she was so sorry she had asked those odious Callverts. She did not know—could not have guessed, she said—that they were so bad—"

Lord Arthur let down the front window with a bang.

"There, that's enough," he said, furiously,

"I can't stand having Neelie's confounded nonsense quoted at second-hand by you. Johnson," to the coachman, "I'll get out at the hill; it isn't five minutes to the station, and they'll wait, of course, when they see the carriage."

And having so said, Lord Arthur, springing from the brougham, escapes, for the moment at least, from the "unmitigated bore" of a conjugal *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER XI.

It is the middle of November, but the sun is shining with such a jocund, bridegroom kind of zest upon the broad Brighton pavement, that, what with the open carriages, the outspread parasols, and the lingering pace of the loungers on the Esplanade, one might almost fancy it July. Seated on a bench, with her eyes dreamily fixed on the dancing, silver-tipped wavelets of the "unfathomable sea," is Lady Arthur St. George. At her side, leaning lovingly against the soft velvet of her dress, is a lovely child, blue-eyed and flaxen-haired, who is occupied in puzzling out the question, why the pretty lady, who looks and speaks so kindly, is, and is not, her own mamma.

"If you are my mamma," little Rosie, who completed several months ago her sixth birth-

day, sagely says, "you can tell those ladies that you won't let me be a fairy. Grannie says you could. I heard her tell aunt Helen so, I did."

"My darling," puts in Florence, "you should never repeat what is not meant, perhaps, for you to hear. But tell me, don't you like, dear pet, to be a fairy?"

Rosie stops to think.

"Yes," she says, at last; "I like the wings, and the pretty glass things that papa took from the big box. Jerry—she says I am to call her Jerry, and it's such a funny name," laughs Rosie, showing between the bright pomegranate lips two rows of tiny pearls, white as the purest milk,—"Jerry's got one of them on her arm; I saw papa put it there."

"When, dear?" Florence, unable, or, I should rather say, too much taken aback to restrain her curiosity, impetuously asks.

"Oh, just now. This very, very day, after Dodo had put on my things, I came in behind the big curtain, and—"

"There, dear, that will do. Suppose we

walk down to the beach; you will like that, won't you? and you can pick up shells."

"But there ain't none," remonstrated Rosie. And whilst she and her new mamma are mildly debating the point, who should come riding by but Lord Arthur and his constant companion, Miss Geraldine Callvert.

"Rosie! Rosie!" calls out the latter, and the child, eager for change, and not fancying the dullness of a shell-less, sandless beach, runs, with the joyous jumping-step of careless childhood, towards the rails near which the two equestrians have halted.

Florence, with more lagging step, follows. Rhoda is under *her* care—has been confided thereto by the Dowager Marchioness, whose spoilt darling her only grandchild is, and, out of her own sight Flossie has fully determined that her wilful little step-daughter shall not be beguiled. The horses (both of which belong to Lord Arthur) are very "fresh": the one ridden by Miss Callvert, who piques herself upon "sticking well to her saddle," is

amusing himself—having just left the stable —with sundry curvettings, innocent enough in reality, but which have been exciting enough to cause a few loiterers, whose time hangs heavy on their hands, to wait in silent expectation of a scene.

"Now then, Rosie, what do you say to a ride? Like it? I thought so! Won't we have a nice time! Here, young man," to a beardless cavalry soldier who stands grinning near, "give this little lady a leg up, will you."

The man is about to do her bidding,—Lord Arthur, who is engaged in conversation with an acquaintance, taking no notice of her proceedings,—when Florence, springing forward, lays a detaining hand on the child's shoulder.

"You are very kind, Miss Callvert," she says, haughtily, while her face, which is pale as ashes, betrays the conflict which is being carried on within; "but I cannot permit Miss St. George to do as you propose. Rhoda, my dear, come home," and she takes forcible possession of the small unwilling

hand, which Miss Rosie vainly endeavours to hold behind her back.

"Let me go! I'd rather. I want to ride before Miss Callvert!" vociferates the child; upon hearing which outcry, Lord Arthur wheels round his horse, with the exclamation of—

"Hallo! What the deuce is the row now?"

"Oh, papa, *please* tell her," pointing to Florence, "to let me ride. Miss Callvert says I may, and—"

"But, dear child, it's dangerous. Arthur, don't let her; Miss Callvert can never hold her and manage the horse too."

"Nonsense! The animal is as quiet as a donkey, and I won't have the child made a 'milk-sop' of;" and he is dismounting, in order to aid in the transfer of poor Rosie to Miss Callvert's tender mercies, when the latter, either beginning to doubt her own infallibility, or seeing, in the rapidly increasing crowd, signs and warnings that public opinion was against her, suddenly veered round, and promising the "troublesome monkey" a ride

on a future occasion, rode, with Lord Arthur beside her, laughing away.

"For the Downs, or the Cliffs; what say you?" he asks, as the horses prance gaily along the King's Road, and many a masculine eye is turned (in the open, undisguised admiration, which is precious as the air she breathes to Geraldine) on her *débonnaire* and brilliant beauty.

"Oh! the Downs, certainly. We can't speak here for the noise; and I want you to tell me—what you promised, don't you know?—about the jewel-case."

Her keen eyes—eyes which have aided her for more years than she would care to own, in the study ("proper," we are told, when pursued by "men") of the sex which can only (I speak of such specimens of their kind as Arthur St. George) by craft be fed and fathomed—her keen eyes, then, searching as poor Flossie's never could have searched, into his cold, inscrutable ones, felt sure—sure as that *she* could, an she would, prove herself a match for him—that it was "Atty's" purpose to deceive her.

"He will put me off with a sham," she said to herself; and, in thus deciding, Jerry, often as she had successfully backed her own opinion with a wager, never made a shrewder guess.

CHAPTER XII.

THE idea of his little daughter acting a fairy's part in the play, of which the fair Geraldine was to be the heroine and *prima donna*, was only interesting to Lord Arthur for the reason that the woman in whose thrall he temporarily was had set her mind on little Rhoda being beautifully got up for the occasion.

"She must be all one sparkle," the imperious beauty said; "and all the jewels you can get together must be heaped upon her."

So, on this hint, Lord Arthur, cognizant of the fact that at his house in town was a certain casket containing jewels which had belonged to his first wife—the which jewels were, it was currently believed, destined to become eventually, unless some at present unforeseen

"difficulties" should arise to prevent it, the property of her child—telegraphed to a confidential servant, to, with all care and speed, send down the jewel-case to Brighton.

"Oh! That is too delicious of you!" exclaimed Miss Geraldine, when his Lordship imparted to that young lady the step he had taken. "I do so love looking at pretty things!" And whilst the gentleman, who, much as he admired the eager speaker, had no fancy for being *fleeced*, was making up his mind to avoid, if possible, the opening of dead Dora's trinket-case in her presence, she, as fervent a diamond-worshipper as ever was daughter of Eve, set herself to devise new schemes for the utter subjugation of the man, of the lawful possession of whom by Florence she (Geraldine) was so bitterly and unceasingly envious.

And there were moments—moments when the heart (or what did duty for that organ) was, as well as the brain, overheated by wine, and by the lavish display of Miss Jerry's somewhat florid order of beauty—when Lord Arthur felt himself capable of committing

any folly—even, it might be, to the sacrifice, to a minor extent, of self—for Geraldine Callvert. But such emotions were not, as the girl had tact and experience enough to perceive, lasting; and therefore, to "make hay while the sun shone,"—or, in other words, to put out her nets, and draw in the produce of her toil, before the storm or the darkness overtook her,—was the mode of proceeding which seemed to the "smart" American to be "wisest, discreetest, best."

On the evening of the day when Lord Arthur had duly received unconscious Rosie's somewhat valuable inheritance, there was that in his manner, when he made his appearance before the "world," which even those who felt little or no individual interest in the man could hardly fail to notice. On his cheek-bones—usually colourless—which surmounted his rich "wealth" of beard and whiskers, there was a flush, as of some deep emotion, which had but a short while before sent, for a moment, the life-blood coursing quickly through his veins, leaving it there (until re-action came) to stagnate.

Strangely abstracted, also, was he, and, for the first time, absolutely and even coarsely rude to Florence.

The Callverts, at *his* invitation, together with three or four other dinner guests, were momentarily expected, when Lady Arthur, entering the drawing-room in her simple demi-toilette, found the husband, from whom she had almost ceased to expect words of kindness or tokens of affection, walking, evidently lost in thought, to and fro the brilliantly lighted room.

It was a stormy night—"the sea and the waves roaring"—and the ill-fitting window-sashes playing an incessant castanet accompaniment to the roll of the shingles on the beach, and that of the carriages on the cliff.

For lack of anything more interesting, pending the expected arrivals, to say, Florence falls foul of the Brunswick Terrace windows.

"Did you ever hear anything like them?" she says. "I don't see how any one *can* sleep through it. Perhaps Poynder could do something to the sashes before we go to bed."

"*Do* something!" her husband repeats, mockingly. "That's so like a woman! Always making a row or a fuss about something! I dare say you'll sleep just as well as anybody else; and if you don't—"

"I was not, I assure you, thinking *only* of myself," she puts in quickly—eager, not so much to justify herself, as to avoid the climax of brutal incivility which she felt could not but follow. "I am anxious about Rosie," she adds, trying hard to be calm, and to keep down the indignant remonstrance that is rising to her lips; "she has been in such a state of excitement all day, that I am afraid, if her rest is broken to-night, that—"

"She won't be well enough to act to-morrow? So that's your little game, is it? What precious humbugs women are. But, by G—"

"Hush! Do not degrade yourself and me by swearing in my presence. *Noblesse oblige;* at least, I have heard, methinks, of some such saying; and you would do well, Lord Arthur, to sometimes remember what is due to your *order*, and yourself."

Any furious rejoinder to this indignant remonstrance which Lord Arthur might have felt inclined to make, was cut short by the announcement—in the well-trained tones of Mr. Poynder—that the next-door neighbours had arrived.

"Mrs. and Miss Callvert, and Miss Jerrildyne Callvert." "Clear as a trumpet," but with no silver sound, ring out the words; and in an instant, exercising the natural gift of self-control which enables women at a pinch to hide emotions of which they feel ashamed, the stereotyped smile of society breaks forth on Lady Arthur's still trembling lips, and with the sham cordiality which so often does duty for the real, she greets her unwelcome guests.

But to say, with any chance of being heard and obeyed, to any heart beating so high and fast as does poor Flossie's with anger and wounded feeling, "Peace, be still," is out of the question. For her,—for the woman whose life, as she despairingly reminds herself, has to be passed with a husband for whom she has more than begun

to feel the contempt which is, of all sentiments, the most effectual extinguisher of love, — the prospect before her is blank indeed; and during that noisy, rollicking dinner, she, playing the almost mute and automaton-like part of hostess, whilst the brilliant chatter of the strong-minded Transatlantic ladies is the cause, if not of "wit," at least of laughter, from all the men (more especially the host, who seems to have no thought for any present, save his *décolletée* right-hand neighbour), Florence, in bitterness of spirit, asks herself the perilous question, "Have *I* no loving heart to lean on? Is there none who, deeming *me* perfect, would hang upon *my* words, let them be ever so trivial and little worth, as though they were as precious as the Oracles of Delphi?" And as her thoughts wander — thus vaguely questioning — away, the image of Frank Chamberlayne rises up, all unsummoned, before her, and the blush of involuntary shame spreads over her face.

A thousand times as the evening wore

on, and the small hours of another day were reached, did Florence, wrought to a state of mind which only a woman who has been insulted by a man (and that man a so-called gentleman) can understand and enter into, feel on the point of retiring from the room, which her husband, by the open display of his coarse admiration for Geraldine Callvert, was rendering no fit place for his young wife to linger in. Hanging over the piano, whispering low, with the eyes, which, when he chose, could say so much to women, fixed, with a gaze from which a modest maiden would have shrunk, upon the charms which Miss Geraldine was at little trouble to conceal, Lord Arthur, for the first time setting the appearances which were so decidedly against him, at defiance, awoke, not only in his wife's, but in the bosoms of each of his female guests, a wondering curiosity as to this sudden throwing overboard of the proprieties of life and of society.

"You are going too far—you had better mind what you are about," is Isabel Callvert's advice to her younger sister, as they

were parting for the night. "Lord Arthur, if I mistake not, is just the kind of man to get a girl into a hole and leave her there."

"Think so? Well, if a girl is idiot enough to be got into a hole, it serves her right, in my opinion, to remain in it."

Geraldine laughs, in her light chaffing way, as she runs upstairs to bed; for, in truth, she feels strangely, and not altogether unaccountably, triumphant. Lord Arthur, as he pressed her opera-cloak upon her broad white shoulders, had whispered to her words of an import so mysterious, and withal so pregnant with a, to her, glorious future, that it was no wonder if Isabel's "low" remark —a remark so disagreeably suggestive of failure and possible disgrace—was received by her with utter derision and scorn.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARTLEY VANE'S first step, the moment that he found himself at liberty to act, was to send off a note to his mother, enclosing one for the old nurse, who, although she lived "independent" with a married daughter, whose husband supplied "pure milk" to the inhabitants of Chelsea, was always ready at the call of her former mistress, when, from sickness or any other cause, Mrs. Lee's services were required.

"Mother, dear," he wrote, "I dare not ask *you* to come to my poor Lizzie in her distress—this place is so wretched, so poverty-stricken, so different from anything that you have ever seen; but if you think that dear old Patty would come, will you send her my note? Lizzie's mother is dying — will probably have breathed her last before this

letter reaches you; and the poor child, who will never be your daughter, mother,—no such luck for me,—has been since I came, and until five minutes ago, in terrible hysterics. I hope Mrs. Lee will come. They seem such a rough lot of people here, and Lizzie has always kept aloof from them. I cannot leave her—it would be too cruel—without some one to protect and encourage her."

This was the letter which Hartley Vane, with his whole soul brimming over with pity and tenderness for the friendless girl,—suffering, as he believed, for others' sins,—wrote to his mother; and, notwithstanding the love she bore him—nay, from the very intensity, perhaps, of that great love—there was that in Hartley's missive which, redolent of all good and amiable feelings though it was, roused within his parent, feelings of which the excellent woman afterwards felt ashamed. The very mention, as her possible daughter, of a girl situated as was Lizzie, stirred within her the embers of a still smouldering pride, and rendered her son's

humility, as regarded that young lady, anything but pleasing in her sight. Then, too, (albeit Hartley had distinctly written that he dared not ask her to visit the dreadful place where "*his* poor Lizzie" dwelt,) the very mention of this impossibility clearly proved to Mrs. Vane that her son did not, in reality, put such a proceeding on her part so utterly out of the question as—as, in short, he ought to have done.

The whole affair was, in fact, very terrible to the widow; and the picture which she mentally drew of her boy, *surrounded* by noisy, discreditable women, and administering restoratives to a screaming young person, who might, for ought Mrs. Vane knew, be acting a part in order to excite the compassion of one so likely to fall an easy prey to female wiles as was Hartley,—did not tend to soften her heart towards the luckless heroine of the adventure.

Nevertheless, the drawing of that imaginary sketch was not without its use. At all costs, Hartley must be rescued from the danger into which his own kindness of heart had led

him; and, in order to effect this desirable end, Patty Lee must, without delay, be sent for.

"Dear old woman! I shall like to see her face, when she hears that one of those 'forward hussies,' as she calls all the young women of the present day, is setting her cap at Mr. Hartley."

So soliloquized Mrs. Vane, as she waited the advent of the old servant,—the place of whose abode was within a street or two of the quiet river-side home in which the lady sat and mused over her boy. But in deciding that Martha Lee would take precisely *her* view of the matter, Mrs. Vane was mistaken, or rather, she reckoned without that natural inclination to disappoint expectation, which is inherent in some female breasts. Moreover, as her years crept onward to the threescore-years-and-ten,—after which, the strength of the mind, as well as of the body, ceases, in most cases, to be aught but "labour and sorrow,"—the doating affection of old Patty for her nursling grew to be of a kind with which reason had, year by year, still less and less to do.

"Boys will be boys," was her novel remark, after Mrs. Vane had made her *au fait* of the "terrible position" in which Hartley was placed; "and it's well it's no worse. There's many a widow's son, and sons that are not widow's, who 've ruined their parents for the galls, long before they was Master Hartley's age. You may take my word for it 'm, that there's nothing against the young person; if there was, Master Hartley 'ud never have written or spoken to his mother about her. I know him better than to think so ill of him," adds the loyal old soul, drawing herself up a little proudly, with the thought that *she*, at least—whatever may be the case with the mother who bore him—has never allowed *her* faith in the "best young man that ever stepped on shoe-leather," to be, even by the breadth of a single hair, shaken from its equilibrium.

"Then you think you had better go, Martha? It seems a strange place, from what Mr. Hartley says, and I should be afraid—"

"No need to be, ma'am; Master Hart was

never one to bring disgrace on his mamma, or any of them as belongs to him. Wallington Row, is it? I seems to know the name. Out Pimlico way?" musing. "Well, well; there's some of all kinds everywhere; and if the young person's mother's a dying, why, sure enough, Mr. Hart will be put about, perhaps, to know what to do."

This thought proved a decided hastener to Mrs. Lee's movements. Like the majority of her age and class, to come in for a *death* was, in her opinion, to be decidedly in Fortune's way; and when to this gloomy, though enviable, advantage was added that of being the first to see and pronounce judgment on the "young person", whom Master Hartley had (solely, as his "mamma" affirmed, for charitable reasons) aided in her trouble, the worthy old servant's willingness to proceed on her way will be easily understood and appreciated.

Left to herself, and to the reflections which Mrs. Lee's visit had for a short while interrupted, the widow found it impossible, even with the aid of a cup of tea—hot, strong, and

well flavoured—to keep from her mind certain self-reproachings, envyings, and regrets, which would perforce find entrance there. "What and if," she asked herself, "her boy should think her—especially as contrasted with old Patty—unkind, unmotherly, Pharisaical? What and if the love wherewith he had loved her hitherto should grow, under the influence of such feelings, changed and dim,—how, she inquired of herself, could she bear that load of woe?—how, with her son's affections alienated, could she endure the years which lay, perchance, between her and the grave?"

Sarah, who lived in a chronic state of jealousy of the larger amount of confidence (an amount the existence of which she denies to all save herself) that Mrs. Vane places in her more tried quondam servant, looked on with grim satisfaction at the untasted bread-and-butter, and the evidently forgotten tea.

"That Mrs. Lee has been a worritting of missus again!" she said to herself, as she bore away the tray. "Some nonsense, I'll answer for it, about Mr. Vane. 'The least

known soonest mended,' say I, when it comes to what young men are a doing of. Give 'em their latch-keys and ask no questions. It 's the only way to get no lies told you; and so I should tell missus, if she 'd listen to me."

In the mean time the poor mother, anxious, jealous, and heart-sick, sits by her fire, and builds her hope—not, it is to be feared, like Wordsworth's Cumberland widow, "in Heaven" (for she, as is the fashion of too many of us, put off the counting of *that* cost till all earthly foundations should have crumbled away)—but in the past of the lad in whose principles she had faith, and whose sense of honour was worthy of more chivalrous days than ours.

"He has never deceived me yet," she says to herself; "and till he does, I will believe in him."

CHAPTER XIV.

PHYSICAL beauty, when it is of the kind which women selfishly, as well as ignorantly, worship, is doubtless a terrible temptation, as well as a talent, dangerous in the extreme, alike to its possessor and to those who—seeing it is never hid under a napkin—are brought within the radius of its influence.

With the exception of his great personal advantages, and of a certain graceful tenderness which (alternating as it did with real brutality of speech and manner) he could put on at will, Lord Arthur possessed, in reality—a fact which, methinks, I have before hinted at—no quality calculated to win the love or esteem of a right thinking woman; and yet *two* good, and eke averagely sensible, girls had been—and that without much previous demur or difficulty—bold

enough—that boldness being attributable to the passionate love that causes silly mortals to rush on evils that they know not of—to trust their happiness within his keeping.

To neither of these poor young women had Lord Arthur's heart—for the reason, probably, that they were legitimately his own—been faithful for an hour; and it is scarcely too much to assert that (money for the indulgence of his expensive tastes being already scarce,) one of the happiest moments of "Atty's" self-indulgent life was when the doctor who attended poor Dora informed him, with a lengthened face, that her ladyship's days were numbered. That with his face and figure, his *power* over women's hearts and fancies, and, lastly, with the *title*, (by which so many are bewitched into forgetfulness of the advice that prudence dictates,) he might easily win a second matrimonial prize, Lord Arthur entertained, and with reason, no shadow of doubt; and now, at thirty-three, with but few traces, thanks to his vigorous constitution, of past dissipation dimming the lustre of his eye, or thinning

the luxuriance of his dark-brown hair, Lord Arthur, standing on his own hearthrug, and, with the rank cowardice which is so often characteristic of a thoroughly selfish man, bullying his own wife, is about as fine a specimen (externally) of our British aristocracy as this great country of ours could produce.

Florence, who had been disturbed by his entrance, and who, noting the expression, a thoroughly domestic one, which her husband's handsome visage wears, had steadied herself, as best she could, for the blow—seeing that a blow, metaphorically speaking, the conjugal hand was uplifted to strike.

"Now I should just like to know who has put you up to this," his lordship is saying, savagely. "It is rather too good a joke, upon my soul it is, when you know all the expenses which I, with this beggarly income, have been put to lately, for you to presume to do anything but simply what you're told."

Poor Florence! We all know how, on hearing such a speech as this addressed to her, it was her bounden duty, as a Christian

and a wife, to answer. Before her there lay (plain as the plainest woman, who ever, thanks to the features that God gave her, has never found it hard to stand upright) three courses from which to choose, namely, silence, which is "golden," the "soft answer which turneth away wrath," or the "grievous words that stir up anger."

Can such of my readers who are either young or sensitive,—such, especially, who chance to possess and to foster foolish notions about chivalry, and the fashion in which the strong ought to conduct themselves towards the weak—the husband towards the wife,—wonder, in that Florence does not even make an effort to act rightly, at this young woman's conjugal shortcomings? But, whether ye wonder at her conduct or not, the fact remains patent, that Flossie, who, not five minutes before her husband's entrance, had been schooling herself to be, as far as in her lay, to "the faults" of her handsome, popular Lord, "a little blind," and to his virtues (purely imaginative ones on her part) "ever kind," is so roused and goaded,

not only by his words, but by his manner, that she breaks forth into passionate, and loudly spoken anger.

"I do not understand," she, panting with eager breathlessness, retorts, "your venturing to say such words to me. I have given you all—" ("Vulgar!" Lord Arthur mutters audibly beneath his moustache). "Ah! you do not understand! I gave you love, all that I had to give, and the rest, that which alone I feel *you* cared for, went with *that*—"

"I don't know what you call 'giving,' with your humbugging sentimentality," he sneers; "all I understand and say is that a confounded little goes into *my* pocket, and that if you don't shell out—sell, I mean—five thousand pounds before twelve o'clock to-morrow—"

"Five thousand pounds!" she repeats. "Oh, how right your brother was to warn me!"

"Ah! So it was his Lordship's doing, was it? I guessed as much. Now, I tell you what—"

"No," rising from her chair hastily, "I

will be told *nothing* more. I cannot, will not listen to rudeness,—the rudeness," speaking with bitter emphasis, "of a man, calling himself a gentleman, to a woman whose weakness ought to be her best protection. I will leave you. I will write to your brother —I—"

"You had better. I give you my free leave, and, while you are about it, suppose," taking a folded paper from his pocket-book, "you tell him that I have found, in a secret drawer in my first wife's jewel-case, a little document which cannot fail to interest both you and him. The original is where I tell you—this is only the copy; you can send it if you like, though I advise you not—to Upp. *He* won't be pleased, I fancy, about the coming heir, you know. However, do as you like, but don't forget the sum I mentioned—five thousand pounds—you know. You had better telegraph to Westerton."

And having so said, Lord Arthur, leaving a small piece of folded letter-paper on the table, lounges, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, from the room.

With her hand pressed to her side, and stirred by an intuitive, though unreasoned on, consciousness that the cause of Lord Arthur's sudden and most complete change of speech and demeanour towards herself (a change which had mystified, well nigh as much as it had grieved and angered her) would now be fully explained, Florence darts upon the paper.

At first, so great is the confusion in her brain, the lines which her eyes view convey to her mind no distinct ideas; but gradually the mist clears away; the name of Harvey Bloxholme stands forth distinct and clear, where all seemed blank before; and Florence —putting "this" and "that" together, a process which we all, when we so will, are equal to — began slowly to recognize the *probability* that her father had been married twice, and that consequently she and the so-called Dora Wyngate were, or rather had been, sisters!

CHAPTER XV.

THE conjugal dialogue contained in the last chapter had taken place immediately after breakfast, and Lord Arthur, who was attired in hunting costume (for the meet of the fox-hounds was on that day within easy distance of Brighton), had never looked, at least in Geraldine Callvert's eyes, a more "proper man" than when, after swinging her light weight into the saddle, the two, followed at a respectful distance by Lord Arthur's groom, turned, at a slow trot, their horses' heads towards the Downs.

The fair American was in brilliant looks and spirits. The play had been a "success." All Brighton (and Brighton chanced just then to be full to overflowing of *nous autres*) had been present, and had clapped their aristocratic hands in commendation of a perform-

ance which, had it been enacted in a licensed theatre, and paid for at the rate of so much per head, scarcely one of the audience but would have pronounced an "execrable take in."

But seeing that, fortunately for ourselves, the gods have not bestowed on us the "giftie" that would enable us to see, with others' eyes, *ourselves*, the Callverts, and more especially Geraldine, were delighted with the result of their labours. To be sure, Mrs. Callvert, who was not, unwilling as she would have been to own the fact, quite as young as she had been, was suffering, by reason of the draughts of air to which she had rashly exposed her wonderfully got-up person, from a rheumatic attack in the shoulder; and that poor little Rhoda—the victim of other people's vanity and folly—was tossing, feverish, and fretfully complaining of her head, on the sofa in Lady Arthur's dressing-room.

"I think I had better telegraph to Lady Uppingham," the anxious young step-mother had, before the storm burst, remarked to her husband; but to this suggestion the

latter had turned, after the manner of men when practical proof of their fallibility is to the fore, an absolutely deaf ear; and later, after the threatening thunder-cloud had discharged its pent-up violence, leaving the poor young "wanderer on life's highway," crushed, and stunned, and heart-sick, the petted darling of the Dowager Marchioness was left, for a longer time than "Grannie" would have at all approved of, to the sole care and guardianship of her nurse.

An excellent woman according to her lights, and worthy of the amount of trust that "the family" placed in her, was Miss St. George's head attendant; but narrow-minded and prejudiced, to an often inconvenient degree, was Mistress Janet Butler; and, moreover, she was as fervent a rank worshipper as could, amongst the upper ten thousand of "the three kingdoms," be found. Herself the daughter of a small tradesman in Somers Town, her contempt for Lady Arthur's unaristocratic birth was as sincere as it was openly expressed; and the melancholy fact that "Miss St. George's step-mamma" hadn't

a title in her family, and that she (Mrs. Butler) was, nevertheless, forced to call her "milady," and to receive "orders from her about the child," was to the autocratic nurse a very real and standing grievance.

The first thing that aroused Florence (after the terrible discovery that had been forced upon her) to a sense that life had still for her *some* duties to perform, was the entrance into the drawing-room, after a knock which, being only sounded as a matter of form, she had not waited to hear answered, of Miss Rosie's nurse. Florence, with all the delicate colour banished from her cheeks, and with the air of one who has received a blow from which full recovery is doubtful at least, if not impossible, is sitting near the table, her arms stretched out over it, and with a strangely vacant look in her large blue eyes.

Mrs. Butler has entered with angry feelings surging in her breast. Miss St. George, after being put in peril of her life, was undergoing the grossest neglect at the hands of the lawyer's daughter, and she, the nurse,

was determined to let her Ladyship see that a stepmother was not to have *all* her own way with the young lady whom *she* (Mrs. Butler) had the charge of. The Marchioness should know the truth, so she should; and thereupon the angry sounding tap was given, and in the portly woman walked.

But, having a heart in her bosom, the sight of Lady Arthur's evident suffering calmed her at once; and, coming forward quickly, she exclaimed—

"Oh! Milady! What, for goodness sake, has happened? Have you heard bad news of your friends? Shall I call his Lordship, or send for a doctor?"

"No, no, thank you, Butler; I am not quite well, but say nothing, please," the poor young thing, making an effort to recover herself, answers. "It was the heat, perhaps, last night, and oh! how could I? I quite forgot about Miss Rhoda! I asked Lord Arthur about telegraphing, and he said 'No.' Perhaps he thought it better not to frighten Lady Uppingham. How is the poor little thing's head now, nurse? I am so *very*

sorry. I wish, with all my heart, that she had never been sent here."

"And I'm sure, Milady, so do I. One doesn't know what may come of such wickedness as this acting, and if the innocent child *is* stricken for death—"

"Oh, Butler, how can you have such dreadful thoughts?" exclaims poor Florence, and then, roused by the shock which the nurse's gloomy suggestion has given her, she rises totteringly from her seat, and makes her way upstairs to her own room.

Extremely sorry for herself, and fractious to a degree that was by no means agreeable to those about her, was, during the first hours of that, by her step-mother, never-to-be-forgotten day, pretty, over-indulged Rosie; but, towards evening, the cooling medicines administered by the doctor began to take effect, and, by the time that the sun had ceased to shine upon the stream of carriages that had for hours rolled along the cliff, the child, by whose side Florence had never for a moment ceased to watch, had sunk into refreshing sleep. Then, in the

lowest of whispers, Lady Arthur desired the nurse to go down to the housekeeper's room to tea, and, alone with her thoughts, she commenced the terrible task of thinking them out to the very dregs, and that without stint or favour.

If all were true which Lord Arthur, in leaving her that paper, had thrust upon her then half-bewildered understanding, she, the woman who was bending over his child, sharing his home, his "bed and board," and the name and title of which she, poor foolish girl! had been so vain, was no wife—God help her!—but a "creature" to be spoken of in future by those who knew her story, with, at best, contemptuous pity! And that the tale *was* true, she did not, *could* not, doubt. Although, previous to the day, now more than eight-and-forty hours ago, when Lord Arthur had received from London the jewel-case in which he stated he had found the original of that dreadful paper, he had taken no especial pains to conceal from her the fact that he had grown weary of the chains which bound him, yet

it was not till *after* the opening to view of his dead wife's treasures that he had with a reckless cynicism, which by rousing her indignation lessened in some sort her pain, set, not only *her* opinion, but that of the world in general, at defiance. For a while, and till she had reasoned out the matter thoroughly, Florence could discover no cause (beyond the pleasure of indulging, free of any restraint, his own ill temper, his own taste for what Florence called low society) sufficiently powerful to account for the extreme haste to be rid of her which Lord Arthur had on that morning, still more unmistakably even than he had done before, exhibited. She was rich; the most considerable portion by far of the large fortune which she had brought with her to her *husband* was in her own power to do with as she chose, and,—but at that moment, the moment when she told herself, in bitterness of spirit, that seeing to what extent she had already contributed, and *might* still contribute, towards the well-being and comfort of that hard, unfeeling man, it was singular

that he should not have shown some little *ménagement* of her feelings, some slight desire, at least, to retain the positive advantages which had accrued to him through her alliance. At that moment the idea flashed across her brain that not only, seeing that a man cannot marry two sisters, was she not a wife, but that her fortune having devolved upon her as her father's "heiress-at-law" (he having died intestate), she, the supposed rich *partie*, the made-much-of-by-the-world Lady Arthur St. George, was not only illegitimate, but a beggar!

CHAPTER XVI.

"WELL, my boy, thank God I have got you back again! And how is the poor girl? I sent off old Patty, and thought you would have been here two hours ago."

Mrs. Vane kept up three hours beyond her usual bed-time, and having been a prey during that period to severe maternal anxiety, takes some credit to herself for the non-display, during her short greeting, of any of those agitating feelings with which her kindly bosom is at that very moment miserably distracted. Full sure is she, if only for the reason that her boy's countenance, when seen by the full light of the lamp, is pregnant with some mystery, *perhaps* not to *her* ears to be divulged, that events, since she saw him, have occurred which will be as rocks thrown into mid-stream, changing the hitherto peaceful current of their lives.

Too excited to be conscious of bodily fatigue, Hartley, throwing himself into a chair, but still holding in his the hand which, on his entrance, he had taken, says, as he strokes it deprecatingly,—

"Mother, a great deal has happened since I saw you; more, I fear, than you will perhaps like to hear of. In the first place, the poor woman—Lizzie's mother—is dead."

"Ah! You expected that."

"Yes, but Lizzie did not. She could not realize that there would be no farewell,—no pardon asked or granted."

"I should hope that none would be required," Mrs. Vane says, a little coldly; and Hartley, *feeling*, as sensitive natures are ever over ready to do, the sudden chill, involuntarily lets drop the hand he holds. "A young girl," continues Mrs. Vane, too engrossed with her subject to notice the action, "can hardly,—I mean, supposing her to be what you describe,—have done anything that is likely to lay very heavily on her conscience. She—"

"Mother," breaks in Hartley, passion-

ately, and, rising at the same time from his chair, he takes up upon the hearth-rug the position of a man who is about, at all risks and hazards, to assert his independence. "Mother, you do not mean it, perhaps, but what you say implies suspicion; and you have no right, nor will I listen—"

"Hush! my poor boy, hush," the poor mother, who feels herself to be supplanted, and would fain save out of the wreck some small remnant of the wealth of love which she before believed in. "Do not, dear, be angry with your mother. Remember how forlorn, how desolate, she will be if you abandon her; and—and—bring," speaking with amazing effort, "your Lizzie here, and I will learn, for your sake, to love her."

With a fervent, tender kiss, he thanks her, deeming her (not comprehending otherwise than very dimly the great sacrifice she has made) sufficiently repaid and comforted; and so, the way being cleared, he speaks again, and this time not without sadness in his tone.

"She *may* not consent to come, dear mother!

Lizzie is a peculiar character. Only from those she loves will she accept of favours, and—"

"But *you*," hastily. "Surely, after all that you have done for her, after—"

"Mother, you talk as if services, as you call them, were to be bought and sold, and bartered for! What! Do you imagine I could ground a claim upon a woman's liking because of some fancied act of kindness I had rendered her? And for Lizzie, besides, I have done—*could* do—nothing! We are friends,—dear friends, I hope,—no more. Even if, if she loved me,—which (I talk of the only love that I could value) is a boon that I have long learned to think of as impossible,—even then, how could I drag her down to share our poverty, to make her life the burden that a woman's must become when she sees those she loves asking for bread, and receiving instead the hard, cold stones of want and hourly privation?"

Again, as the words "dragging *down*" escaped her son's lips, the proud nature of the woman, who had borne so bravely, both for herself and those she loved, the ills which

lack of "means" entail, asserted itself within her; and it was only by one of those efforts of which the *élite* of her sex, and they alone, are capable, that she crushed down the expression of her wounded feeling; for, to her thinking, Lizzie Blunt, poor, illegitimate to all appearance, and habituated to the society of a mother of whom she had tacitly owned that she was ashamed, would, were she admitted to *the* home of the widow and her son, be lifted (in comparison with her former surroundings, and, probably, her own deserts) to a high place indeed.

To as much as hint this opinion to Hartley was, however, out of the question. "Under the spell" was he, and until he should emerge (a result which, in his mother's opinion, only marriage was likely to accomplish) from beneath an influence which Mrs. Vane — whether rightly or wrongly, who shall say? considered to the last degree pernicious, her *rôle* must be a silent and a waiting one.

Hartley is the first to break a silence which both mother and son are beginning to feel oppressive.

"It was a great relief," he says, "when dear old Patty came. And when all was over, and Lizzie more composed, we took the poor child to her aunt,—her only near relation, I believe,—and to-morrow—"

"To-morrow," with a magnanimous effort, "we will go together, dear, and try what my persuasions joined with yours will do towards overcoming the poor girl's objections. I have such confidence, dear boy, in your judgment, your discrimination, that—"

"Mother, dear," puts in Hartley, who, in truth, feels a very decided objection to his mother making acquaintance with the poulterer's shop through which he had on the night before escorted his weeping love, "I think, perhaps, it will be better to allow her time to recover herself. She is but an untaught, self-educated girl; and to such, restraints of manner and of feeling are almost unknown. I should like you so—so very much—to know and love her, that—"

"I quite understand," interrupts Mrs. Vane, brusquely; and — although Hartley is too much occupied with his own plans

to observe the signs and symptoms of alienation—his mother's heart once more closes against the girl who seems to have so little need of, or inclination for, her notice. "And now, dear," she adds, "as it is very late, and I am half-dead with sleep, had we not better say good night?"

She kisses his forehead as she says the words, and ten minutes later all is silence in the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE habits of intimacy between Lord Arthur and the Callverts are both so closely familiar and so well known to Florence, that, when dusk deepens into darkness, and the foot, which has, alas! no longer music for her, is not heard upon the stairs, she experiences no sensation of uneasiness. Moreover, she is still so absorbed, so bewildered, by the mighty change which since the morning has opened gloomily out before her, that the probability that Lord Arthur—with splashed hunting-boots, and in the red coat which "Jerry" thinks so becoming — is taking at that moment a cup of tea from the hands of the free and fearless young American, is one which does not occur to the lonely-hearted woman, who, rousing herself ever and anon to amuse the child, whom a noise

below has awakened with renewed fractiousness from her slumbers, is a prey to as melancholy and desponding thoughts as ever Christian fought against, or Pagan—with a pistol—ended!

What should she do with her life? How without love—the love that a passionate heart needs and feeds on—can she bear existence? And who—the thought, for she is only twenty, and *l'amour avait passé par là, would* come—who is there who would love her now?

Whilst she is thus—self-pity rising strong within her—musing over the blank of her hapless future, the door of her room opens gently, and infinitely to her surprise, the well-dressed figure of Mrs. Callvert makes its appearance.

Bewildered by an apparition so totally unexpected, Florence at first fails to in any way connect the presence—at that hour, in her room—of a visitor whom she knows and likes so little, with any possible evil which may have happened to her husband.

Her thoughts, as we have seen, have not

been running upon him. The greatest evil which Fate has in store for her—*the* evil from the mere contemplation of which an anxiously expectant and loving wife shrinks in trembling dread—was not, for Florence, an accident on the hunting-field to her husband; and this being so, fear has not led to anticipation, and her first feeling at sight of Mrs. Callvert's agitated face was one of almost unmixed surprise. But the next! Ah! how quickly comes the sense—full and all-pervading to heart and brain—of a great calamity, an abnormal event, one which changes, in a second of time, the course and prospects of a life! The simple laying of that woman's ring-decked hand upon her arm, and the words, gaspingly uttered, of—"Poor thing! You must try and bear it. There was no one else, or I would not have intruded at such a time"—were enough, and more than enough for Florence; and, with a low cry of mingled grief and horror, she sank upon the chair from which she had risen, and covered her face with her hands.

"Dear. Be calm—sit still—shall I bring you ether? Sal volatile?"

Ah! how plainly the words told their dreadful tale! Something, for which all the drugs (save those marked in big letters "Poison") that ever chemists' shops contained could work no cure, had happened, and, ere many moments more had elapsed, Florence had been told the soul-stirring truth—that she was a widow!

The noise which half-an-hour before had awakened little Rhoda from her troubled slumbers was the bringing home—an unconscious burden upon *its* bearers' hands—of the magnificent earthly frame which only a few short hours before had been animated by the soul of Arthur St. George. By one of those apparently trivial accidents, which, nevertheless, are often as effectual as more "serious" ones in separating the corporeal from the thinking, acting man, the selfish, heartless prodigal, who had never dreamed of the possibility that "length of days" would not be his, had been cut off in the prime, not only of his manhood, but his sins.

His last act before mounting the horse which was destined to become his executioner had been one of wanton cruelty. Provoked at the moment by his wife's refusal (a refusal to which, as we already know, she was prompted by her kind and prudent brother-in-law), Lord Arthur, the weapon wherewith to strike being ready to his hand, used it with remorseless force against the woman whom he had sworn to honour and defend.

The belief,—one, however, which he had as yet taken no pains to verify as based upon a sure foundation,—that his marriage with Florence Bloxholme was null and void, and could be, if he felt so inclined, pronounced as such, gave him a pleasant sense of unexpectedly-recovered liberty. In the mean time, supposing (a fact which he saw no reason, in consequence of other documents found in Harvey Bloxholme's well-known writing contained in the sealed packet, to doubt) that Dora's mother had been the barrister's lawful wife, why then, Mr. Bloxholme having died intestate, the whole of his large fortune would devolve, as a

matter of course, upon his only lawful child.

His *only* one! Could he be sure that so it was? And how about the girl so like, and yet so unlike, dead Dora, who had been so long the object alike of his (Lord Arthur's) admiration and curiosity? Should the discovery come to be public property, that girl would probably have a right—if daughter of Harvey Bloxholme she were—to share and share alike with her elder sister the property which the rich lawyer left behind him.

This, to Lord Arthur, was no agreeable prospect for the mind's eye to dwell on, neither was its cheerfulness improved by the recollection that the date of Mr. Bloxholme's second and more regular marriage might possibly complicate a matter which, on a first view, had appeared to the non-legal mind a simple one enough.

On the whole, and viewing the case with the calmness engendered by recovered "temper," and by the healthy effects of fresh air and the companionship of indifferent persons, Lord Arthur came to the conclusion

that, in making Florence the sharer of his secret, he had been guilty of a mistake.

"Women are such confounded fools!" he said to himself. "They never *can* help blurting out things that they ought to keep to themselves." And then and there, with Geraldine Callvert talking "fast" nonsense by his side, he registered a vow to take "confounded good care, till the right time came, that Florence should discreetly hold her tongue."

In the mean time, his flirtation with "Jerry" had received an impulse, the extent of which was evidenced by an amount of familiarity which the recipient thereof, who was in tearing spirits, took no pains to check, and by a certain open appropriation of the young lady, who was without a *chaperone* (she was indeed, with one exception, and that a too well-known one, the only daughter of Nimrod who had on that day taken the field), of which Miss Callvert, who felt no disinclination to being taken care of by a Lord, had not the maiden grace to feel ashamed.

The meet was a large one, consisting chiefly

of men who, indulging in the fond hope of not "finding," were sanguine as to the chances of getting back to Brighton in time to display themselves and their well-worked, hired hacks upon the Cliffs. A few, and amongst these was Lord Arthur St. George, liked hunting for hunting's sake, and they, in common with the rest of the scarlet coats, were eagerly watching the movements of the hounds, as, with sterns erect, and making no sound save the rustle of their impatient selves amongst the cover into which they had been thrown, were deluding the sanguine into a hope that in that small, low-lying wood a fox would ere long be found.

Close alongside of Geraldine was Lord Arthur, his mind intent for the moment upon "sport," whilst, well within hearing, the strong brogue of the lady who hailed from County Galway, and rarely missed, if she could help it, a day with the hounds, was clearly recognizable.

"Oh! the beauties! But they 'll find soon! Shure I smell a fox—" erecting her handsome nose in the air. "Lord Arthur, me dear

fellow, didn't you—Och!—" and the scream of the good-natured, *unvisitable* one rang loud and shrill through the still November air—"What, be the Powers, did he throw such a lep as that for? Shure the bank's as rotten as a sleepy pear!"

Long before she had done speaking, a dismounted crowd had gathered round a prostrate man, who had—as Mrs. Leicester, with more force than elegance, had expressed it—"thrown a lep," which those who were accustomed to the sight of such accidents shook their heads ominously over, as they eyed the place.

What had possessed him, or rather, as some thought, what had possessed the horse, a practised Irish jumper, to fumble at that miserable bank, and then fall backward on a rider who, as a rule, knew so well what he was about as Lord Arthur St. George? But speculation on the causes of the misfortune was useless now. To drag the horse—one of whose legs had become entangled in the exposed root of a tree, and whose weight, pressing on the fallen rider,

rendered his situation critical in the extreme —was, of course, the first object to be effected; and this done, dandy Dr. Hewett (who had been bred to the medical profession, but had lately, through the good luck of marrying a wealthy widow, given up practice, and taken in a mild way to hunting) scanned, with a critical eye, the form in which, to not one spectator had it as yet occurred as possible, that life was actually extinct.

But so, in fact, it was! In falling, Lord Arthur's head had come violently in contact with a projecting tree-branch, and death, as Dr. Hewett solemnly pronounced, must have been instantaneous!

And then followed that gloomy silence— a silence which, in the presence of one who can hear no more in this world for ever, we, the survivors, are so given to spontaneously fall into; and men who respected Lord Arthur St. George far more now that he was a senseless clod than they had done in the days of his insolent contempt for all that was wise, and excellent, and of good repute,

aided with ready hands to prepare the bier on which all that remained of Florence St. George's once passionately loved husband was to be conveyed to the home of the widow whose short period of married life he had contrived to make miserable indeed.

Utterly forgotten and overlooked had been Geraldine Callvert during the scene which I have briefly attempted to describe. To do her only justice, no thought of self had, since the fatal fall which she had witnessed, crossed her mind. The shock, the horror, which, when she saw the immovable limbs, the rapidly glazing eyes, she experienced, seemed, at first, to paralyze her into stone. A very weak, poor, useless portion of humanity was this pretty, flirting butterfly. Afraid to look on death—with head bent low over her saddle bow, and *some* shame mingling with her bewildered feelings of dismay and grief—she followed the dismal *cortége* townwards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Do you remember once saying to me that you should like us to meet under a roof. What do you think now? Was not the open air of the parks," Lizzie asks of her lover, "better a thousand times than this?"

A week has elapsed since Mrs. Blunt's sudden death. The simple funeral — the expenses attendant on which were defrayed by Hartley Vane—is an event already three days old; and the girl whose mother had, in fact, been so little of an object to be regretted is beginning—although the fog is thick without, and the little back parlour behind the poulterer's shop is a mean and miserable-looking "bower" enough—to recover something of her former life and spirit.

She has taken up her abode, for the present, at least, with good Aunt Bessy, but

the trial of living in a place, and with surroundings that are so totally at variance with all her somewhat vague notions of delicacy and refinement, is very great.

Happily for her, neither of the young loutish cousins, who had been the torment of Aunt Bessy's existence, were cumbering the family domicile. The eldest had long since "gone for a sailor," and many months had now elapsed since Mrs. Jennings had heard tidings of her first-born. The second, a tall, active young fellow, had been for some twelve months in the "Police Force," and the charge of the shop was undertaken by a paid *foreman*, whose meals were eaten out of the house, and who did not sleep on the premises.

Hartley Vane, who is leaning his elbow on the mantel-shelf, his stalwart legs being in no danger, seeing how infinitesimally small is the fire that is smouldering in the grate, of being over-roasted, gives no direct answer to Lizzie's half-sad, half-playful question.

"How I wish," he says, vehemently, "that we could strike out some other way

of living for this good aunt of yours. This horrid business does not answer. I was talking to the man there"—pointing towards the shop—"about it, and it is my belief that when his wages are paid, and all expenses, there is but just enough for her to live on."

"Ah, but there *is* enough, and that makes all the difference."

"If I could only get you and her into the country—into some tiny cottage! It is dreadful to think of you in this close, unhealthy hole."

"And dreadful to *see* me here, eh?" smiling a little sadly. "But you are quite right, you *have* no business here. You make the place look worse—you—"

Following the impulse of his five-and-twenty summers, Hartley, forgetting, till roused by the thrilling touch of her soft lips, how strange an act he is committing, places, for a single instant, his fingers on their perfect beauty.

"Forgive me!" he exclaims, as she draws back, blushing and confused, "I could not bear to hear you say such words. They

make me feel that I must seem to you so mean and small."

"On the contrary, it is because you are so generous and large," with an attempt, though the tears are standing in her eyes, at pleasantry, "that you appear to be so out of place in such a 'hole' as this."

Again, for a few moments, whilst Lizzie industriously plies her needle, there is silence between them. At last Hartley says,—quite, as he flatters himself, in a business-like manner,—

"I wonder if your aunt would be willing to give up this losing business; it *might* be sold for something."

"And, then, if I were living anywhere else but in a shop, Mrs. Vane would come and see me! Now, Mr. Vane—Well, then Hartley, if you like it better; is not this true? You have so often let me see,—and I really have been flattered by it,—that you wished your mother and me to meet. But only fancy! a *lady* in a place like this! Not even a private door! The very lowest kind of shop, in short! Oh, I quite agree

with you that it is horrible; but what can we do? It is very doubtful whether, if we had money enough to go into some blessed country cottage, poor aunt Bessie could be moved. And yet,—oh, how I pine for her and for myself for a fresher, sweeter air than we breathe here! Sometimes I think—"

"What?" sitting down beside her, the handsome head side-bent towards her face. "Tell me all. You have said more than once I was your friend. Why, then, have any secrets from me? Dear, had you a brother whom you cared for, you would not cheat him of your inmost thoughts."

"Not when of those thoughts I had become already more than half ashamed? For—ah, I am bitterly discontented! I was going to say that sometimes I think with what is almost comfort of the chance that this bad, stifling air will kill me. Life is so sad—so uphill to the poor."

"But, Lizzie, we—that is, I—may not be always poor. I shall work hard; get briefs; and then—"

He fixes his dark eyes on her blushing

face; and she—well, gratitude, admiration, pity, sorrow for her lonely self, combine to soften her girl's heart towards him; and so, impulsive in her turn, she places her small hand in his, and, without word spoken, they are betrothed.

An hour later Hartley, with a step and air to which his mother has not of late been accustomed, enters her little sitting-room, and, kissing her with more than usual warmth, says, gleefully,—

"Well, mother! it's all right; and I am the very happiest fellow! Lizzie has said Yes; or, rather, she didn't *say* it exactly, but we quite understand each other at last. I am to work hard, and so is she; and, when we have money enough, we are to marry."

"And who is to decide what is enough?" the prudent voice of middle age suggests. "Ah, my dear, I fear that you are being led on to promise very foolish things."

"Pshaw, mother! to talk of Lizzie leading *me* on! If you could only conceive the difficulty that I have had in leading her—"

"But, my dear, now that it is, as you say,

all settled, surely it is time for me to make acquaintance with your promised wife? I confess to being anxious—curious, if you will. The girl who is to be my daughter-in-law—"

"Ah, mother, even now I feel such happiness is too great to be real. She is so very beautiful; so—"

"Lady-like, I hope, and well behaved," puts in poor Mrs. Vane, who has been taken by surprise, and who, finding the course of her son's true love likely to run more smoothly than she had expected, cannot *quite* command either her temper or her feelings.

And Hartley, excellent son though he is, is angered too, and answers, as we all of us are too apt to do, hastily and without thought.

"Well, I don't know, never having seen her at meal times, whether Lizzie eats with her knife, or commits any atrocity of that kind. She is all right about her h's; and if she had a piano, poor child, (a luxury which she is never likely to possess,) I believe that she could play upon it. However, there is

no use in talking of her: some day, I hope, it will all come right,"—and then the heart, which is so utterly incapable of retaining an angry feeling, prompts him to add,—

"You mustn't think, mother dear, that I shall love you the less because of this great happiness. Hitherto, God knows, your sorrows have been mine. *Won't* you let yourself be a sharer in my joys?"

And so—for what mother deserving of the name could be deaf to an appeal so tender?—the widow and her son were reconciled; but never again—no, never again—could the old times, the old feelings, be as they had been of yore, for the parent's part was played and over—the dog, faithful unto death, had had its day!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE death, in the hunting-field, of Lord Arthur St. George caused a considerable amount of sensation in the world. The Lord Arthurs of society, especially when they are handsome, "fast," and unprincipled, are not allowed—like men of coarser clay, and gifted with less obtrusive habits—to slip without a "requiem" from the place which they have filled so notably. He who in his lifetime makes a stir, and gives a fillip to the "world" he lives in, does society a service; and, when his place is empty, the first feeling amongst those who miss him is, that they could have better spared a better man.

As for "poor Lady Arthur," the sympathy expressed for *her* was great and boundless. "She was so young!" "It had been, on *her*

side certainly, a love match, *pur et simple*;" and then the chances (which really had been very favourable) of her one day becoming Lady Uppingham, were over — "so *very* unfortunate, poor thing—for ever!" "Truly it was very sad!" "Did anybody know" (this with hushed voices, and with bated breath) "whether there was any prospect — any likelihood, of a posthumous heir to the most noble Marquisate of Uppingham?" "Lady Arthur had now been married five months," so said the gossips, "so there could no longer be much doubt on the matter now."

Whilst those who, seeing that they knew nothing of the newly-made widow's inner life and feelings, may be called the "general public" were thus making themselves busy over her loss, she, being blessed with youth, sound nerves, and a healthy body, was gradually *steadying* herself after the quickly succeeding blows which had been dealt to her. The last, because the only irremediable ill, she found by far the hardest to support. In the true spirit of Christian forgiveness—

the forgiveness which passes a sponge over even the memory of an unacknowledged offence—Florence saw in her dead husband only the idol of her youthful fancy; whilst as regarded, not alone the last "scene" in which they two had been the actors, but others also, when "poor Arthur's" temper had given way, Florence allowed herself the melancholy satisfaction of believing that she herself, having tried that noble spirit over much, had been the cause of all.

To Barbara Fendall, who was, promptly as steam and electricity could bring her, by the side of her suffering friend, this "over Christian spirit," as she irreverently deemed it, was not a little provoking. She had, however, the sense to see that Florence's state of mind was one that could not possibly for any length of time continue, and, till the re-action, born of common sense and of returning calmness, should take place, Mrs. Fendall wisely resolved to bide her time in silence.

Of the strange and startling statement

which had so immediately previous to her widowhood led Florence to more than doubt the fact that she was a wife, she had as yet, even to her dearest and most trusted friend, said nothing; nor was it till a fortnight after the funeral (an event which preceded by about ten days the humble obsequies of the woman who, by the marriage of her child, had been so nearly allied to her own dead husband) that Florence summoned courage to investigate the contents of the carefully locked-up jewel-case which has in this story played a humble but important part.

She had arrived late on the previous evening at Somerford. Both Lord Uppingham and his genial though not over-sensible wife had written to her the warmest letters of invitation—letters which if she had been their sister-in-law through lengthened years, instead of an almost stranger transplanted only a few months since into the family soil, could hardly have been more frankly, more unmistakably affectionate. And Florence,

possessing, as she believed, no near relations of her own, and clinging, as is the wont of many newly-left, desolate women, to the kindred of the husband they have lost, thankfully accepted the invitation, and, with the still unopened jewel-case carefully packed amongst her most valued possessions, wended her way—Barbara Fendall having, with loving care, seen her "off" from the Great Northern Station—to Somerford.

And now behold her as in her widow's garb, the garb which—poor soul!—she fears that she may have no right to wear, she sits in the large, silent dressing-room fitted up *now* with loving care for Flossie as a "boudoir," in which, when she so chooses, she can—with prettiest things around her, with flowers and works of art, and all that helps to make mere existence *sometimes* a choice possession—escape from even the sympathy of those she loves, to dwell in solitude on memories of the past.

She looks very young—younger even than her age, as she leans back in her chair; some

open letters and papers on her lap, and in her fair face an expression of stern determination that is singularly at variance with the almost childlike roundness of that face's contour, and the perfect smoothness of her brow.

She has indeed, within the last "strange, eventful" page of her life's history, learned much—enough indeed to prematurely ripen "character," to destroy illusions, and to, it might be, harden the heart. But Florence does not possess, unhappily for herself, a nature which, by being exposed even to the fiercest fire of disappointment and mortification, can be turned to stone. Of fine clay, the porcelain clay of which so much is *broken* in the process of fire-hardening, that what remains is doubly, trebly precious, and of such material had Florence St. George's heart been fashioned.

Flashes of anger, desperate as they were fleeting, had ere now emanated from her heart, and impelled, not only her tongue, but her pen, to the utterance of rash and

reckless words; but penitence and self reproach had always followed, as is the case with all truly generous natures, quickly on the offence; and even now, now when she has learned that her own father, urged doubtless thereto by a lately born feeling of remorse, had, at *her* expense, the expense of the daughter whom he had *seemed* at least to love, taken measures to satisfy his brooding conscience, Florence could find pleadings for pardon for him in her heart.

That Harvey Bloxholme either had (or, guided by his own wishes, imagined that so it was) believed, before his union with Flossie's mother, his first wife to be dead, he had, by his own written statement, endeavoured to make apparent. In the event of her demise having saved him from the crime of bigamy, it was also clear, even to the female and illogical mind, that, Lord Arthur, having successively married two sisters, she, Florence, had never been his wife!

At this confirmation of her worst fears, the pulses of the young widow's heart stood

for a moment still; and it was only by a gasp which heaved her breast convulsively, and shook her nerves from head to foot, that she regained power over herself; for in that moment of time fierce temptation had assailed her! To none save herself was this most terrible secret known; and were she to destroy the proofs of that former marriage, who would be the wiser, who the worse, she asked herself, for the deed? The hopes of there being born a direct heir to the family lands and honours rested, as well she knew, upon *her*. Lady Uppingham, after a marriage of five years, appeared little likely ever to become a mother; indeed, so completely had she made up her mind to the fact that no infant of hers would ever "clamour, whether pleased or pained," in the Somerford nurseries, that she, in her lively *insouciante* fashion, had, during Flossie's last visit, often alluded to the subject, enjoining upon her young sister-in-law, after the fashion of an experienced matron, the observance of every care and caution which

so important a vocation as that of Lady Arthur St. George demanded.

Yes, Flossie was, she felt, a "personage" now. Were a son to be born to her, and for some curious and undefinable cause she never doubted that her child would be a boy, in him (when the kind, generous-hearted Marquis should be gathered to his fathers) would centre such greatness as might well seem formidable (but did not, for youth is proverbially fearless) to the expectant mother's eyes. Very terrible on the other hand was, to Florence, the idea of the fall which it was in her power, and in hers alone, to give herself. Fully alive was she to the advantages of rank and the possession of wealth, and to wilfully give up both was an act for the doing of which she frankly told herself she could not, *just then*, summon courage. Only that morning she had received letters (amongst them was one from Lady Flintshire) full of that flattering graciousness which, even when its worthlessness is felt and understood,

nevertheless has its value, and Florence, thinking of these things, resolved, as she pressed the packet into the secret drawer of which, by dint of keen search, she had discovered the secret, resolved to put off to "a more convenient season" the cleansing of her bosom from the perilous stuff which had so disastrously found entrance there.

CHAPTER XX.

FOR the first time in her life Florence, after a troubled sleep, awoke with the sense that she had commenced playing an unworthy part in life strong upon her.

The sensation which, even whilst dressing, and with the memory of her former visit (the visit which, as a wife, she had so lately paid with *him* at Somerford) vivid within her, she found it impossible to shake off, was as disagreeable as it was unwonted; and as the pale young widow took her place at the breakfast-table, both Lord Uppingham and his wife were forcibly struck by the look of suffering that was visible on her expressive face.

"My poor darling! you have never closed your eyes!" exclaims impulsive Neelie; and

poor Florence (the briny bed of whose salt tears is full to overflowing) all but weeps as she asks herself whether, did Lady Uppingham know her to be a nameless imposter, she would use such caressing words, and kiss with such sisterly affection her pallid cheeks.

Lord Uppingham, as is his custom during breakfast, is opening his letters—making, as he does so, running comments on the contents of those which are likely to, in the least degree, interest either his wife or Florence. The gift of "small talk" has been denied to "Upp," but in exchange for the want—and it is a considerable one, even in a Marquis—he possessed that rare absence of the desire *de se faire valoir*, which in a high-bred Christian gentleman naturally leads to an instinctive desire to please. Rarely (however much engrossed in some communication especially interesting to himself) does he forget the claims of others on his attention; and, at the moment when Florence is shrinking within herself

at the thought of her bitter, and, look at it as she will, never-ending disgrace and misery, *he* is searching amongst the heap of business letters before him for one which may contain matter of interest even to the grief-stricken woman beside him.

At last, he—"providentially," as poor Florence afterwards decided—fixes upon a missive which seems likely to answer his purpose; for, after casting his eyes over it, he says quietly,—

"Another letter, the fourth within a month, from Bernard St. George. Poor fellow! His misfortunes certainly come thick and fast upon him. They have scarlet fever in the house now. Algernon, the eldest boy, has failed—discreditably, I fear—and—"

"Oh, my dear Upp!" Neelie, playfully stopping her ears, says, "don't tell us any more dreadful things! Poor Flossie looks miserable enough already, without being doomed to listen to all the calamities which Captain St. George brings upon himself and his family."

"Scarlet fever included," drily remarks his Lordship. "But, my dear Neelie, on the principle that one nail drives out another, don't you think I may as well try the remedy on Florence there? She is thinking, poor child!—(that is right, dear, don't make strangers of Neelie and me. 'Give sorrow *tears*,' and it will melt, in time, away)—she is thinking of her own grief, her own desolate future, and the 'burden that is laid upon her seems greater than she can bear.' But now, if I can only interest her, for a moment even, or rather, perhaps, for the time that it will take to write a cheque for this poor, distant cousin of ours—"

"Oh! tell me, please, Lord Uppingham," Florence breaks in eagerly; "I shall be so glad, so grateful—"

His Lordship looks at his wife triumphantly. "My prescription has begun to work wonders already," he says, and then, "I must tell you something about this unfortunate man, so that you may better judge to what extent he is deserving either of pity or of aid. He

married at nineteen (being then an Ensign in a regiment which had just returned from India) for what is called *love*, and his wife, one of the most commonplace as well as the most prolific of her sex, was the daughter of a retired military officer, by whom Bernard was 'coached' for his examination. As you probably know, he, though a distant cousin, is—is—in short, circumstances *may* cause Bernard St. George to be, some day, in a very different position from the one which he endures—with no great amount of philosophy, I fear—at present."

"Oh, I feel sure that he is a most impatient person," puts in Lady Uppingham didactically.

"Should either you or I, dear, be patient if we had eleven children, and only seven hundred pounds a year, and that mortgaged, on which to feed and clothe and educate them? Poor fellow! Nature made him a bright, genial man enough; but how, weighted with such a load, can he bear up as a man? 'How

on earth,' he said to me one day, 'could the *loss* of his twelve children come to be counted as one of Job's trials?'—'They must have been taken from him before he lost his income,' I remarked, upon which he seemed satisfied that all was right. And with it all, those children of his are dear to him as ever sons and daughters were to a man's heart. Over the promising boy who died (the *only* promising one), he shed more tears than many a mother expends upon her only one; and I have known him—"

He is stopped by Florence rising suddenly from her chair, and saying, in a voice that is scarcely audible from emotion—

"Lord Uppingham, I must, please, speak to you directly after breakfast, *alone*. Don't be hurt, dear Neelie," pausing, as she passes Lady Uppingham's chair, to kiss the astonished upturned face of the sister-in-law, with whom never again would she probably feel on terms of happy equality, "Lord Uppingham will tell you all, after—after he has—has been

in the room that you have made so charming, and heard what I have to say."

And so, with a sickly smile, she glides, pale as a woman who has just escaped some deadly peril, from the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

"AND it was Arthur who first told you of this strange discovery? How singular! What could have been his motive for so acting. You—"

"Ah, do not ask me! Let us not search, after hot words are spoken, for a motive which, after all our pains, may be a false one. There is enough to occupy, to dwell on, without that. And in the first place," continues Flossie, with a simplicity and self-abnegation which to Lord Uppingham (who has as yet found no words with which to express the admiration that he feels for her conduct) are inexpressibly touching,—"in the first place, will you tell me, please, what you think I ought to do? I was horribly wicked last night, and thought that I would, *just at first*,—no longer, I hope,—keep it all

secret. What you said about poor Captain St. George made me feel so different—so guilty—and now—"

"Now, dear, that you have been so honourable, so—"

"Oh, don't say that. How can any one take merit for doing that which, if he had left undone, he would have been stigmatized as base and vile indeed? I am relieved—I am indeed—now that it is over; but I should like Neelie—Lady Uppingham," correcting herself with a blush, "to be told at once I may not have—indeed, it almost seems clear I have not—any right now to call her sister; and—"

She had begun bravely, but Nature, at this point, would have its way, and the coming words are drowned in tears. There does not exist one man in a thousand who, when a woman with whom he is in converse weeps, knows what to say or do; and, amongst the exceptions to this rule, Lord Uppingham could not, unfortunately, be reckoned. His mind, usually a clear one, and capable of taking large as well as rapid

grasps, is in a state of indescribable confusion now. Not as yet has he recognized *one* satisfactory turning point in the perplexing path which Florence has brought him there to tread with her; and, being no lawyer, he can think of nothing more encouraging to suggest than that Frank Chamberlayne should, without an hour's delay, be telegraphed for.

"And in the mean time, my dear sister, I entreat of you not to jump too hastily at the worst and most painful conclusions. This, this first marriage—if, even, we *can* so call it—may not be legally valid—"

"But you *think* it is? You have read my father's letter—his attestation of its truth?"

"Yes, and the more I think of it all, the more I am puzzled to discover his motive for leaving with his daughter papers which could but be productive, after his own death, of worse than confusion—of difficulty, of ruin, it might be—to the daughter who bore his name, and was to be the heiress of his fortune."

"My poor father! You do not know, perhaps, that he died quite suddenly; I only

inherited as heir-at-law, for he left no will. It is possible—but, no; I think he loved me too well for that—he could not have *intended* this bitter shame and disappointment to fall upon his child—"

"My dear, of course he could not. His leaving those papers previous to his last journey, (which you told me of,) with poor Dora, was, probably, only one of those impulsive acts to which even the most practical of men are sometimes liable. The consciousness of wrong-doing—forgive me if I pain you—may have led him to make some compromise with the inward monitor, and so, not having the courage to destroy the papers which might confer legitimacy on the dead, he—"

"Stamped a brand upon the living!" bursts in Florence, passionately. "Oh! Lord Uppingham, view it which way I will, it is all terrible—"

"If true; and for further knowledge we must wait patiently for the coming of that good fellow, Frank. His uncle, having been your father's intimate old college friend, must

surely be able to throw some light upon this perplexing business. *I*, not being a lawyer, imagine that much, everything almost, will hinge upon the date of the first wife's death. Should the marriage of your parents have taken place *before* that event—"

"I shall be base-born!"

"Yes, dear," taking her hand, and pressing it with warm, brotherly tenderness between both his own; "but in that case you will be poor Arthur's lawful widow, and the son which will, please God, be born to you, will, one day, I trust, be my successor here. Your boy, dear," with a cheery smile, as he rises from his chair to leave her, "will have a long minority, so that with good management the mortgages may be paid off—"

"And *you*, I know, will forgive me for being penniless, and—"

"Tush, say no more till Frank arrives, and leave Neelie to me. You cannot stand much talking, and Neelie is just a *little* voluble. Rest then, dear, for the present; and, above all things—*hope* for the best."

CHAPTER XXII.

And Florence *did* rest, calmer and more peaceably than she had, for many a night, done before; and, albeit she lay under the shadow of a great change, and that suspense, that hardest, well-nigh, of earthly visitations to support, was still her portion, she awoke refreshed, and free, comparatively speaking, from that terrible sensation—one which the experienced in suffering alone have cognizance of—the sensation, namely, of a weight, heavy as lead, upon the heart, whilst from the lips, a groan,—as though they would say,—"How *can* I bear it?" half-unconsciously escapes.

I have not attempted to describe either of my heroines as perfect, and therefore human nature, and especially *female* nature, being what it is, the reader will, perhaps,

not be over-much inclined to blame poor Florence, when he learns that the prospect of Frank Chamberlayne being *personally* consulted (and that, too, without delay, at Somerford) as to the condition of her affairs, was not without its comfort. That he had once—and that with something better, truer, than mere ephemeral passion—loved her, Florence, albeit he had never given his devotion words, had, with all a woman's quickness of intuition in such matters, known; and there had been moments in her life—I fear me much, indeed, that those moments had been more frequent than Lady Arthur St. George would have cared to own—when, stung thereto by sharp words and more than suspected wrongs, the memory (for it was, she *told* herself, *only* a memory now) of a deep, pure love, had stolen, with a strange admixture of regret, consolation, and self-reproach, into a breast which would not wittingly have harboured so much as *one* guilty thought.

And now, now that she can, without sin, recall to mind all the proofs—unobtrusive

but nevertheless not to be mistaken—which Frank Chamberlayne had, before she became a promised bride, given to her of his heart's devotion, it was ("shocking," as to some over-sensitive mind, it may be, on her part, considered) an exceeding consolation to Florence to *feel* in her inmost breast the almost certainty that not *quite* past recall might be the devotion which, in her folly, her "wickedness" (for she did not, in her self-examination, spare herself, and the memory of Barbara's neglected Warning was very bitter to her), and her self-conceit, she had so little prized.

But surely, it may be said, this young woman must have had, one would think, for the time being at least, enough of matrimony? Her experience of the so-called Holy Estate had not been so delightful as to cause her to long again for its more than doubtful enjoyments, its transient pleasures, and its, alas! too often disregarded vows! She had, and that, too, so lately, gained by bitter experience the certainty that the wife is not—in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out

of a thousand—"dearer than the bride," and she had found, too, and that cruelly to her cost, that the "familiarity" of married life is unfortunately apt to "beget contempt," and yet—and yet— Well, if Hope did not sometimes triumph over experience, and if there were *not* some women in the world capable both of forgiving and forgetting, the orb we live in would be (for, as the poet sung—

> "As for those chilly orbs on the verge of creation,
> Where sunshine and smiles are both equally rare,
> Did we want a supply of *cold hearts* for that station,
> Heaven knows we have plenty on earth we could spare")

a still worse place to exist in than it is already.

"Well, dear, and how did you sleep? Like a top, I am sure, for you look more like yourself—the self that I remember—shall I say when?" said Lady Uppingham, looking archly at her sister-in-law, who, though sufficiently refreshed in spirit to indulge in comfortable thoughts of her own, was very far from strong enough, either in mind or body, to enter, with anything

approaching to zest, into Neelie's well-meant banter.

But, as is the case with those who are alike sensitive and unselfish, Florence shrank, to an extent which amounted to moral cowardice, from wounding, in the very slightest degree, either the feelings or the *amour propre* of another. Rather than permit Lady Uppingham to discover—a somewhat unlikely circumstance, by the way, seeing that her ladyship's feelings in such matters were rather the reverse of susceptible—that she had betrayed by her question an absence of tact and delicacy, Florence would almost have gone the length of replying to a query which, recalling, as it did, the day (so vividly contrasting with her present state) when she was as thoughtlessly happy as an unreasoning child, could not but be to her distressing in the extreme. From the consummation of this act of self-sacrifice she was, however, happily relieved by the volubility—which, to do the fair Neelie only justice, was seldom at fault—of her companion, who, as she commenced pouring out the tea, babbled

away after the fashion of a shallow brook, running (no unpleasant companion on the road) by the pathway which the wanderer is treading.

"Who would ever," she said, "have guessed, when Frank Chamberlayne went away that day, that such wonderful things were going to happen!"

"Wonderful indeed!" repeated Flossie, who felt called upon, owing to a slight and almost imperceptible pause in Neelie's flow of words, to say something in response. "Wonderful indeed! and very, very sad."

"Well, yes. Of course, you must feel it so just at first; but after a time—*Time* does so much, don't you know?—you 'll begin not to think about it."

"Not to think? Oh, Neelie!"

Lady Uppingham (who possesses a true Yankee appetite; indeed, the way that she can "polish off" a plate of beef-steak and oysters is a "caution") is in the act of conveying to her ruby lips a mouthful of the national dish, when she interrupts herself to

(in answer to her sister-in-law's exclamation) inquire,—

"Did I say anything very horrid—very anti-British, eh? You see," assuming, both in accent and nasal twang, so amusing and unexpected a character—namely, that of a middle-class and most unmistakable Yankee —that Florence cannot choose but smile, "we live fast over the water, we do. 'Taint our line to fret ourselves into darned fiddle-strings over what can't be helped. We—Ah," resuming her natural and accustomed tone, "you *can* smile! I'm glad to see that, dear," springing from her seat, and suddenly kissing the cheek which tears and sleepless nights had robbed of all its youthful colouring. "We shall have you all right again some day; and then, and not till then, shall I forgive myself for having helped to make you miserable."

"Which you never did! Neelie! how can you say such things? To me you have been the very kindest sister! Bearing with my *slowness*—my depression—and always ready to do your utmost to cheer and com-

fort me. Neelie, dearest," she continued, striving her best to be calm, but with tears so ready to break forth in floods that her voice trembled, and her very utterance seemed well-nigh choked; "I verily believe that if it should fall out that I have been, in this my marriage, an unconscious sinner; if—if the law should say that I have never been a wife—never been anything *really* to you, and to my dear, kind friend, your husband,—why, it is, I was about to say, my firm belief, so generous do I think your nature, and your heart so true and tender, that you would never change to me,—never make me feel that because of my poverty and namelessness I was unworthy of the place in your affections which—which—"

But here, words failing her, she broke down utterly, and for a short while no sound save suppressed sobs and the soft cooing of Neelie's voice, as she caressed and strove to comfort the stricken woman, were heard within the room.

"Of course, I should be the same, and more than the same, to you, darling, what-

ever stupid thing the law might do; but, all the same, I don't believe you'll ever be unmarried. Possession, you know, is nine points of the law, and the tenth will be—No, he won't; he ought to be the first—the little heir—the future Marquis! Only think of that! So for *his* sake, dear, dry your eyes, and try to show poor Upp, when he comes downstairs, that you are still—as he has always said you were—the best, and sweetest, and most patient woman in the world."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"UPP, dear, I want you to do something for me—or rather not for me, but for Flossie. You see," continued Neelie, making herself thoroughly at home in a big arm-chair beside his lordship's study fire, "that Florence wants somebody—some woman friend, who is stronger-minded than I am—to keep her spirits from flagging. Now there is—"

"My dear Neelie," breaks in Lord Uppingham, "if there is one species of individual whom, more than another, I dread, it is what you call a 'strong-minded woman.' Talk of *her* giving consolation—*her* keeping up failing spirits! Why, the 'balm' of the strong-minded woman is of the 'precious' kind which 'breaks the head,'—at least it would mine, and my heart too, probably,

if I had the misfortune to be very nearly connected with her."

Neelie bursts forth into merriment at his vehemence. Hers is not exactly a musical laugh, but her husband, who was in love when he heard it first, has since (for habit is second nature, and we *may* grow so accustomed even to the loud crowing of an early cock, that the daily nuisance disturbs us not) all but ceased to notice the fact, that over his pretty Neelie's cachinnations the "sweet control of gracefulness" was sorely lacking.

"Now, Upp," she, after the merry peal is over, says, "how can you be so absurd? As if either Flossie or I would ever dream of having such a horrid creature as you describe, *here!* The friend—Flossie's friend, I mean—whom I want you to invite is the 'Barbara Fendall' of whose good sense and brightness of nature you have so often heard our sister talk—for she *is* our sister, love, this dear Florence, whose life hitherto has been such a sad one, is she not? Whatever

happens,—even if such a dreadful thing as that her marriage should prove illegal, should befall her,—nothing could undo the past, or destroy the fact that hers and your brother's child will be to you almost the closest of earthly relations."

She has, in her eagerness to be understood and heeded, sunk down upon the soft tiger-skin which does duty for a rug, and with her small white jewelled hands clasped on her husband's knee, is looking up, with moistened eyes, into his face.

For a moment he is silent; and then, stroking the pretty pleader's sunny hair lovingly, he says,—

"My child, in this matter—as, I think, without much consideration or speech about it, you might have been sure of—our judgments are perfectly alike; and as for Mrs. Fendall, if Florence wishes it, send her, by all means, a cordial invitation to Somerford. I am not, as you know, partial to strangers, and to a young woman this place must, just now especially, be very dull. But Frank

Chamberlayne has spoken to me in high praise of Flossie's friend, and—"

"At any rate," puts in her ladyship, archly, "she is a Britisher, and—"

"Foolish child! as if that had anything to do with it!"

"Well, but it has," mused Lady Uppingham. "People may say what they like, but they will never persuade *me* that it isn't natural to prefer your own countrymen and women to foreigners. Of course there are exceptions," kissing, as she spoke, her husband's forehead, across which pain and sickness had traced many a deep and premature line; "but *they*, you know, only prove the rule;" and having so said, Neelie hurried away, to cheer—as she hoped and trusted—poor, sensitive Florence with the intelligence that, if such were her desire, Mrs. Fendall should be at once entreated to pay Somerford a visit.

Nor was the kind-hearted American disappointed in her expectations. Florence, long accustomed to lean—albeit she had

failed to heed her Warning—on the stronger and more decided nature of her friend, was truly grateful for the kind thoughtfulness, in this matter as in every other, of her hosts. Right glad was she to think that during her trial—the wearing trial of suspense—Barbara Fendall (of whose acceptance of Lady Somerford's invitation she nothing doubted) would be near, to sustain her sinking courage, and whisper words suggestive of soul-strengthening hope. She had grown very fond of Neelie; but in that fondness there mingled not a particle of the deference, the almost respect, with which Florence was wont to regard her older and more experienced friend. That friend—a fact of which she, Flossie, felt intuitively conscious—was utterly incapable of the womanly weakness of triumphing—in that her Warning had been disregarded, and that her prophecies had been fulfilled—over her weaker sister. The often hard-to-be-repressed words, "I told you so!" would, of a surety, never pass the portals of Barbara Fendall's lips. Whether,

under similar circumstances, Lady Uppingham would be capable of showing equal reticence and self-command, was a doubtful question; and between the woman who *would* thus triumph, and the woman who would *not*, the difference is great.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WELL, dear Barbara, as I wrote to you at the first, it is dreadful whichever way one turns. If this Mrs. Blunt really was poor papa's wife, then—"

"Then, dear Flossie, you will have found a sister, you will be a lawfully married woman, and your child, if he should be a son—"

"Oh, please, dear Rita, do not talk of that! It is dreadful to build castles over anybody's grave, especially the grave of one who is so kind and good as dear Lord Uppingham."

"An affectionate and helpful brother-in-law—generous and chivalrous, I can well believe, from the little that I have seen of Lord Uppingham, that he would always prove himself to be. The poorer and the

less protected, so much the stronger would your claims upon his kindness, to such a man as he, appear; but, Florence, there can be no hiding from ourselves the fact—one which Frank Chamberlayne, who well knows his worth, deeply mourns over—the fact, I mean, that poor Lord Uppingham's tenure of life is very, *very* insecure. Yesterday (and the circumstance of my having only arrived here the day before, proves that the necessity of "working while it is called to-day," is a truth which he at least never loses sight of), yesterday, whilst you were in the garden with Lady Uppingham, he took the opportunity of talking to me—in words solemn it is true, and yet *so* simple—of his coming end, and of the influence which his death must, more or less, have over your prospects, that I left him thinking how great was the pity that such a man could not be spared to do good in his generation. He spoke with deep feeling of you and of your trials—seemed very anxious for Frank's speedy arrival, and is, I could see, extremely sanguine as regards the legality of your marriage—"

"In which case—"

"In which case," interrupted Mrs. Fendall, "Rhoda St. George, your spoilt little step-daughter, will be even a more considerable heiress than she is at present. She and pretty Lizzie Blunt will, I conclude, share between them your father's money; and, oh! Flossie, when I think of it all, I blame myself for not having searched more closely into a mystery, the clue to which I once all but held within my hand!"

"The mystery, you mean, of this poor neglected sister-in-law of mine, Lizzie's parentage,—her relationship, which, perhaps, you suspected, to me and to Dora, as well as— Ah, dear Rita!" after a pause, during which Mrs. Fendall, as the two friends sat together in the fire-light, noticed with uneasiness the trembling of the nervous fingers which clasped and unclasped each other as they lay upon the young widow's lap,—"ah, dear Rita! you have made acquaintance, you tell me, with this ill-used girl; say then, for I wish to know the truth, is she a sister whom I should

be glad to welcome—thankful to acknowledge?"

"Ah, dearest, that is a question which I find it hard to answer. In the first place, Lizzie has been, and is, simply a working girl: at her own home, it is true, but still—"

"Still she is, I suppose, poor child, both in manner and appearance what you would expect a girl in that class to be? There can be no refinement—no *manner*—"

"It is hard to define, I think, what is meant by *manner*. Lizzie is, or rather has always appeared to me, a thoroughly *natural* girl, betraying no vulgarity of speech or accent, and so beautiful, that for her to have remained as good, I firmly believe, as gold, goes far to prove that her moral education has not been neglected."

"It is singular, very singular, murmured Florence, that you, of all people in the world, should have chanced to fall in with her. How did it happen? Where did you see her first? and—and—" a sudden rush of painful memory causing the blood to mount tumul-

tuously to her cheeks,—"was it through the same channel—I mean, was it the same person through whom you heard of Dora's sufferings, who brought Lizzie to your notice?"

Mrs. Fendall was silent for a moment, and then said,—

"You have guessed rightly, dear, and, therefore, I am justified in saying that I held, to a certain extent, the clue to the mystery in my hand. But I felt, as you may well understand, less than no inclination to pursue it. If I entertained any definite idea on the subject, it amounted to nothing more decided than a rather well-warranted suspicion that both Lord Arthur's first wife and her sister Lizzie were your father's illegitimate children."

"But if so, why, I wonder did he, as it were, adopt and give so much money to the elder, whilst he left his younger child to starve?"

"As to that I can tell you nothing. Mr. Bloxholme may have had, like other folk, his caprices—caprices which, in this case,

rendered him, it seems, terribly unjust to the sinless child, whose mother, as it would now appear, he had so deeply wronged."

"And *my* mother," urged poor, angry Florence, "what had *she* done that she was to be the victim of what you call my father's caprices? If he were legally married to that other woman, what right had he to deceive and wrong my mother? Rita, when I think of him as having done this, his memory is hateful to me, and I detest myself for the tears which I worse than wasted over his grave!"

"Hush, dear! Do not speak so bitterly of the dead. Your father may, when he contracted his second marrige, have believed the mother of his children to be dead; and then, a marriage so loosely effected, without any 'ceremony,' civil or religious, might well appear to him as little binding; but, however that may be, reserve your judgment—say nothing of him that is bitter (even to your own heart) till more light is thrown upon a matter of which we at present know

so little. In a few days Frank Chamberlayne will be here, and then—"

"Then," repeated Florence, with a weary sigh, "I shall at least know, for a certainty, my Fate."

CHAPTER XXV.

I AM afraid that had Lizzie Blunt been able to fully realize all that she would, under poor Aunt Bessy's roof, be called upon to endure, that even her pity for, and sense of gratitude towards her suffering aunt would hardly have sufficed to lure her to the shelter of that kind relation's home.

She had been very brave, *outwardly*, when her lover had suggested that the place in which he found her was totally unfitted for his promised bride, the cherished idol of his love, whose path he would (as is the case with many a man *before* marriage, who *afterwards* — unintentionally, of course — aids vigorously in the *crumpling* process) gladly strew with roses; whilst for her, in lieu of the coarse notes of the shopman's voice, and the jarring sounds which from the busy

street reached the loved one's ear, he would have had

> "Sweet flowers to blow wherever she roamed,
> A voice divine should speak in each air,
> Whatever to fancy seemed most fair
> Should be hers—"

if only *he* could have had his will!

But, in the mean time, poor Lizzie was far more uncomfortable than she cared—to her affianced husband, especially—to own. Since she had seen him, *at last*, "under a roof," and that roof one which sheltered beings so essentially different from himself, and *things* to which his surroundings must—of *that* she felt well assured—be in such striking contrast, the girl had, for the first time, become aware that, in asking her to become his wife, Hartley had done her great and exceeding honour. With this conviction—for, to generously constituted minds, a sense of obligation does *not*, especially when the conferer thereof is worthy in himself, sow the seeds of *dislike*—with this conviction, then, "borne in," and hourly impressed upon her mind, Lizzie's love, which had hitherto partaken more

largely of a sisterly character than Hartley, had he been aware of the fact, would have at all approved of, mightily grew and increased. Possibly one cause of this increase may have been a fear—as wholesome in this case, as it was almost unconsciously entertained—of losing that which hitherto she had far too lightly prized. If Mr. Vane *should* (and, ah! judging from her own sensations—her own hatred of the fusty back-parlour, the near neighbourhood of the "horrid" shop, and last, not least, the sight of the dirty, apron-stained shopman—such a result was, she felt, so very possible), if Mr. Vane, then, should become disgusted, and—and—forsake her, what a blank, she told herself, would her existence henceforth be!

Thinking of these things as she sat at her work by the bed-side of her sick relation, (or, which was far less frequently the case, in the detested back-parlour, where the small, greasy, black horse-hair sofa and ricketty chairs seemed—and, in fact, were—redolent of the smell of stale poultry and still staler feathers,) our petulant, self-reliant Lizzie

grew, for the nonce, strangely meek and humble. It was a matter of wonder to her, now, that she had ever thought so much, and with so strong a feeling of repulsion, of the personal defect which, thanks to the magic power of love, had become next to nothing in her sight. To *her* thinking, Hartley was not only the best and handsomest, but the most *perfect* lover whom girl was ever blest with; and when she mentally dwelt upon his goodness, the purity of his life (for, be it remembered, Lizzie was no country-bred girl, who had been carefully kept in the "ignorance" which is not always "bliss," and she intuitively felt that, with the exception of his mother, and the woman who would be his wife and the mother of his children, the "dangerous" sex held no danger for Hartley),—when, I repeat, that Lizzie, musing, as in her solitude she so often did, on the many excellencies of the well-born gentleman who had taken *her* past upon trust, was thankful indeed, and overjoyed exceedingly that *that* past was free—free as the sweet autumn flowers which, on his

last visit, Hartley had brought to her—from taint!

Touch of man, save *his*, had never sullied even the hand which she was pledged to give, on the day *when* it should please *him* to say that the time for doing so had come, at the altar of her God; and—to Lizzie's honour be it said—that "temptation" to tread the "broad path which leadeth to destruction" had not, in her case, been wanting. In the days before that memorable one when the sight of Hartley Vane's strong right arm raised in her defence, put to flight the body of small tormenters who were assailing her, Lizzie's extreme as well as striking kind of beauty had induced more than one of those idle, vicious ones—men whose sole vocation, in fact, seems to consist in making prey of the young, the attractive, and the unwary—to dog her footsteps, whisper words of fulsome flattery in her ear, and suggest to her mind, even more forcibly than had often done the small mirror on her dressing-table, the truth, that to exchange a life of toil, drudgery, and the

dullness from which the soul of bright-natured seventeen revolts, for one of feverish enjoyment—of luxuries only vaguely dreamt of, and of dress! (ah! I am afraid that Lizzie did *sometimes*—as her imagination strayed to velvets, seal-skins, laces—feel her "principles" to be just a *little* shaken), was a question, the answer to which depended solely on herself.

It must not, however, be supposed that Lizzie Blunt had never passed through her moments of danger—never, especially when her mother's temper happened to be more than usually trying, and when, with hands and eyes wearied with the ill-paid labour of her deft young fingers, she contrasted her hard lot with *that of other girls* possessed of not half her beauty, and with none of her sense of right,—it must not, I repeat, be imagined that, at such times and seasons, she had not keenly felt how vast was the difference between Life as it *was*, and Life as, to her, it *might be!* But, all praise to her! she had—as we know—resisted, and verily she would have her reward!

But, in the mean time, and pending the fruition of her hopes, poor Lizzie could not be said to be enjoying what Lady Uppingham would have called "a good time." Some of the causes—tolerably efficient ones, methinks—why this should be, I have already detailed, but of the worst, and most active cause of her discomfort, I have hitherto forborne to speak. It is time, however, seeing that there is some danger of my heroine being considered—especially by those whose lives have been "all sunshine"—as unduly discontented and repining, for me to declare that her fear of the familiarity of a near and under-bred relation (a severe trial, indeed, as all who have chanced to suffer from the same, will, I ween, be willing to acknowledge) was the "feather" beneath which the back of Lizzie's patience all but broke.

Sam Jennings, Aunt Betsy's younger son —he who was in the Police Force, and "a credit," as his fond mother was proud of saying, "to the corps,"—had been invited, she being naturally desirous of doing her dead sister honour, by Mrs. Jennings to

"poor Ally's funeral." The invitation, or rather the maternal desire, was obeyed, and Sam, divested of his martial helmet, and other such war-like gear, duly put in—on the melancholy occasion of his aunt's interment—an appearance. On that day he was not favoured with a sight of the cousin on whose face and form he had not—since she had ceased to be a child—cast his eyes; but, a few days later, the stalwart guardian of the peace and the protector of Her Majesty's lieges was more fortunate. Being, for the moment, disabled from active service,—in other words, a turn-up with some "roughs" having resulted for him in a well-directed kick on the shin, which placed him temporarily *hors de combat*,—the gallant young fellow (bearing, doubtless, in his mind the cheering fact that no longer was his parents' humble home uncheered by the presence of youth and beauty) betook himself thereto, in order that he might receive such nursing and solace as his interesting state of invalidism required.

"And I promised him, dear boy, that you

would take rare good care of him," said Aunt Bessy, who, in the bed to which she had for weeks been confined by rheumatism, had been impatiently awaiting Lizzie's return from the Regent's Park, to which not very cheerful spot, in mid November, the girl had, in search of a breath of fresh air, betaken herself. "I don't know as I ever felt an hour to be so long before, for I've been a dying to tell you the news. Wasn't Sam in the shop, dearie, when you came in?"

Lizzie's effort at seeming pleased with the news that she was henceforth to sit and eat, to talk, and perforce to smile, with (for was not "Sam" her first cousin, and how was it possible to avoid treating him, as what, in fact, he was, *id est*, an equal?) this unexpected and most unwelcome addition to the family, was not altogether successful. A "common" policeman! The idea of him as a daily companion, of, in short—he being so near a kin to her—having to speak to him at all, was very dreadful; and then, there was good Aunt Bessy—Aunt Bessy

to whom she owed so much—delighting evidently in the notion of her (Lizzie's) intimacy with Sam, and talking—oh, it was too terrible!—about her taking care of him!

As these thoughts, the while she sat silently by Mrs. Jennings's bed (noting the brighter light in the good woman's eye as she dilated on Sam's merits, and on the increased pay that it would soon be his happy lot to enjoy), flashed through Lizzie's mind, the girl, moved by a sudden impulse, determined that no longer, as regarded Hartley Vane, would she have any secrets from her aunt.

"Aunt Bessy," she began, "I have been an ungrateful girl. I never told you that I—that—in short, auntie dear, I am engaged—don't, please, look so wonder-stricken—to be married."

And so, the ice being broken, Lizzie told her tale—a tale full to overflowing of surprises to the sick woman, who, with an amount of prejudice not, perhaps, to be wondered at in a matron who had brought

into the world (to be sure, they most of them soon departed from it) seven sons and daughters, "without, my dear, so much as even a strawberry-mark, or a thing wrong about ere a one of them," could not easily reconcile herself to the possibility of her niece's marrying a cripple!

The class to which Mrs. Jennings belonged have, when the discussion of such subjects is on the *tapis*, very limited notions of delicacy, and Lizzie, grateful niece though she was, felt more than half-inclined to be angry when Aunt Bessy—with the best intentions, doubtless—proposed that Sam should, to avoid the very probable jealousy on Mr. Vane's part of a cousin who possessed, happily for himself, both his arms, be advised to take up his quarters elsewhere.

"As you please, Aunt Bessy," said Lizzie, whose relief at the bare idea of the big young policeman's departure was too great for her to trouble herself greatly as to the arguments which would probably be used to effect it. "I have a headache now, and will go upstairs for a little while. You can

tell your son everything about me, if you like."

And so saying, she rose from her chair to go; but the sick woman, gazing at her with wistful eyes, laid a wasted, feeble hand upon her sleeve.

"My dearie," she said, "you won't forget your old Aunt Bessy when you are a lady, will you?"—and hot tears, the pity-rousing tears of age and suffering, rose to her eyes as she spoke the words.

Lizzie, impetuous ever, flung her arms round the neck of the woman who had been unto her as a mother.

"Never, auntie, dearest. Nothing—no, not even if I were to be made a Duchess to-morrow—would cause me to forget all your love, and help, and kindness. How could you," brushing away a tear which all but fell upon the coverlid, "think of such a horrid thing? Naughty Aunt Bessy, you don't deserve to be kissed,"—and, then, after another hug, which was returned with interest, Lizzie made good (for in truth she rather dreaded the possible entrance

into his mother's room of "Sam") her exit from the apartment.

For an hour or more she remained upstairs, the quiet murmuring of voices meanwhile going on below. At length they ceased. The house, in the back portion of which the bed-rooms were, became very still, and twilight had nearly waned into night, when Lizzie made up her mind to venture downstairs. She had feared—she knew not what—a loud voice, a smell of bad tobacco, a greeting—odious to think upon!—full of cousinly familiarity; but, to her infinite satisfaction, she experienced none of these things, for her much-dreaded relation had—suddenly as he had arrived—departed, and she and good unselfish Aunt Bessy were once more the only dwellers in the house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was through the medium of the public press that Lizzie Blunt was made acquainted with the news, that the half-sister, whose lot in life she had so striven not to envy, had suddenly become a widow. And then, in the midst of her own sorrows, and albeit Florence and she had never exchanged even so much as customary words of courtesy, the young girl's whole heart went forth in deepest feelings of sympathy for the desolate one, into whose loneliness she, the lately orphaned, could so truly enter. But with that sympathy there had arisen (so utterly impressed had Lizzie become by a sense of being an outcast from home and family belongings) no shadowy hope that, now that the man who had worked so much of evil to her and hers could harm them no more in this

world for ever, the tie of sisterhood between herself and Florence might be acknowledged, and she (Lizzie) would enjoy the blessing for which she had long pined in vain. But, although in Lizzie's mind no such hope sprung up, the fact of Lord Arthur's death did not pass as altogether an unimportant event in the mind of Hartley Vane. Were it only that it enabled him, by naming the dead man as Lizzie's brother-in-law, to give his love a "lift," however trifling, in Mrs. Vane's eyes, that accident in the hunting-field did not, in the young lover's opinion, occur without some beneficial result—a result, however, of which he magnified the importance. To one who entertained Mrs. Vane's views on such matters, the marriage of one sister to a man of birth went not a single hair's-breadth towards clearing away in either the stain of illegitimacy; nor because Lady Arthur St. George had lived and died amongst the refined and virtuous of the world, could Mrs. Vane see any reason for forgetting the fact that poor Hartley's sweetheart was tainted by evil companionship,

and rendered thereby no fitting mate for him.

After a casual allusion to Lord Arthur's death,—an allusion which, to his disappointment, Hartley felt might as well have been left unmade,—no further mention had, by tacit, mutual consent, been made between the mother and son to Lizzie Blunt, and the girl, clad in the deep mourning which had the effect of rendering her, in Hartley's eyes, more fairly beautiful than ever, was still cooped up in the small parlour which, by reason of its semi-darkness, its lack of ozone, and the occasional prevalence within its narrow walls of odours that were certainly—as I have before hinted—not those of Araby the blest, was clearly not a "bower" calculated to bring back the fading colour to Lizzie's cheeks, or the brightness to her winsome smile.

Hartley, although blest with the conviction that, as day succeeds day, the girl, who has no other friend than he, is learning to love him better, is, nevertheless, far from happy in his mind. That his mother will ever take the initiative, and try to love Lizzie for her

own charms and merits alone, he has ceased to think possible. The worthy lady's prejudices are strong, and in good sooth Hartley himself could not urge upon his parent an act which, by destroying possibly existing illusions, might have an evil instead of the contrary effect upon his fortunes. For Mrs. Vane to pay a vist of ceremony to good Aunt Bessy's back-parlour would, indeed, as he truly felt, be, in all probability, a fatal measure. Lizzie's beauty and grace would, in Mrs. Vane's eyes, be both neutralized and vulgarized by the "low," "coarse," and most "disagreeable associations" — associations which Mrs. Vane, warped in her opinions by prejudices which Hartley could not *quite*, in his inmost mind, regard as unexpected and unnatural,—would, of course, see no reason to doubt differed in little from those to which Lizzie had from her birth been surrounded. On the other hand, Hartley entertained no shadow of hope that Lizzie might, through his entreaties, or moved by her own urgent desire to escape from the small and worse than airless abode which she

could now alone call her home, be induced to take the initiative, and, forgetting her pride and poverty, be presented by Hartley himself, and under his mother's roof, to the good but prejudiced woman whose present life was being rendered thoroughly uncomfortable by reason of the existing state of things.

"She will never do it!—never! She would rather die in that horrid hole of some dreadful fever than take one single step in my direction! I have only won her—if I *have* won her—by a fluke! Her mother's death! her own utter forlornness, and those hysterics before the gaping, curious crowd, were what combined to give her to me; and now, perhaps," mused the desponding lover, "perhaps she regrets her promises! Sometimes I think she does; and if so—but, no: I *could* not, strive as I would to do my duty, give her up. Talk to me of pride and that kind of thing! Of course I know that when a girl has been led by some foolish impulse to do what she afterwards regrets, it is a man's duty to help her out of the wood;

but there are sacrifices, there *are* acts of heroism, of which human nature is capable; and there are others of which, according to *my* belief, it is not; and of these acts of chivalrous self-devotion, I firmly believe the giving-up by any breathing man of Lizzie Blunt to be one."

It was after thoughts such as these, and dwelling with, perhaps, even more than his usual lover-like adoration on the charms and perfections of his idol, that a letter from Frank Chamberlayne met his eyes on entering his chambers.

"Mr. Chamberlayne called himself, sir, and was sorry not to find you at home, as he was going out of town, he said, this afternoon; but the letter," said the talkative, hobble-de-hoy, whom Hartley called his clerk, as he re-seated himself at his desk, "was to tell you all about it."

Which, in fact, it did, and in the following fashion:—

"My dear Hartley,—I write a few lines in great haste, to say that after receiving a

letter and papers from Lord Uppingham, on business which is especially interesting to yourself, I am on the point of starting for Somerford Castle. It appears, as far, at least, as I can at present see,—but don't get your horns too far out, old fellow, for there's many a slip, as we all know, betwixt cup and lip, and it doesn't pay to be over-sanguine,—but, as far as I can at present see my way, that poor woman, your Lizzie's mother, was right in her story, and *her* marriage was the only legal one which the old rascal perpetrated. In that case, the first Lady Arthur and Miss Lizzie are, so to speak, co-heiresses of the personalty, seeing that old Bloxholme died intestate. I will write again from Somerford, and remain yours, &c.,

"F. C."

It is hardly too much to say that the reading of this letter all but took away (temporarily) Hartley Vane's senses. It was so sudden, so utterly unexpected, this news which he was warned not to put implicit faith in, but in which he, nevertheless, did

believe as certainly as that London city stood where it had done for centuries. Only a few short minutes before he had been the most miserable of men, doubting of everything—of Lizzie's affection, of his own possible chances of future happiness, even almost of that Faith and Charity, and sweet power of pitying love, which he had hitherto believed to be inherent in the female breast; but now, in a single moment, all seemed changed. The "stain" was wiped from his loved one's birth away! She was no longer poor. She— Ah! what is it which, in the midst of his wild exultation, checks the rapid current of his blood, and, with it, the newly-raised hopes that are carrying him, as on silvery wings, to Paradise? What but the thought of Lizzie's wealth, Lizzie's grander fortunes, Lizzie's possibly changed aims and feelings!

"If she hadn't been down in the world as she was, she could never have cared for a fellow like me," he bitterly says to himself, as, sinking into a chair, he covers his face with his hands.

But fond, and therefore, perhaps, foolish lover though he is, Hartley Vane is not the kind of man to bear quietly the suspense which he has it in his power to put an end to. By the utterance of a very few words he can, he tells himself, learn what is likely to be his fate; and those words shall, he resolves, be said without delay.

It is nearly one o'clock when he reaches the little shop, and, making his way between the dangling fowls whose tail-feathers brush against his tall hat, he finds Lizzie busily employed in stirring in a saucepan some "mess" which is simmering over the fire.

Barely turning round on his entrance, the rich mellow voice exclaims,—

"You are not to come near till Aunt Bessy's gruel's made. I am so dreadfully afraid it will burn; the bottom of the saucepan is much thinner than paper—"

"But, Lizzie, darling—"

"Never mind," stirring vigorously. "I can't hear a word—"

"But, dear child," and Hartley rests the tall form, which Lizzie has begun to think

so graceful, against the chimney-piece, "I have wonderful news for you,—news which will put saucepans and gruel out of your head—"

"Not really?" she puts in, merrily. "What shall I have left to think of?"

"God knows; not me, I fear," he says, gloomily. And then Lizzie, perceiving that something really serious has occurred, whips off her saucepan and proceeds to listen.

"I had a letter to-day from Frank Chamberlayne," begins Hartley, and is at once interrupted with—

"And he has found out—God bless him! that mamma was married! Hartley, I will go and see your mother to-day. I was ashamed and proud before, but we are equal now!"

"Equal! My darling! But perhaps I may soon have no right to call you so! You have only guessed the half; for you are rich, dear, —so rich that, to marry a poor,—deformed—"

Her sole reply is to fling herself into his arms, and bury her blushing face in the shelter of his crisp brown beard!

"My own," she murmurs; "you were good to me when I was poor, despised, and friendless; surely I am not quite so vile as to cast you off because," laughing through her tears, "I may have money enough to buy new saucepans and a hat—"

"Oh! my precious! God be thanked for the priceless gift that has fallen to my lot," murmurs Hartley, as, over shining hair, soft lips, and blushing cheeks, he showers, unrepelled, love's warmest, sweetest kisses.

CONCLUSION.

A PROUD man was Hartley Vane, when he, with his lovely Lizzie hanging on his arm, entered his mother's cottage, and made his short introductory speech.

"Here she is, mother; and if you don't own that she is a thousand times too good for me, I shall never put faith in your opinion again."

A kiss, warm and welcoming, on each blushing cheek, was agitated Mrs. Vane's sole reply; but in her heart of hearts she felt that, in so far as external beauty went, her boy had indeed chosen well.

And then—and then—Lizzie was no longer nameless, no longer poor! Her "connexions," to be sure, were not *all* aristocratic; but her father had been a gentleman, and her two sisters—for "poor" Lady Arthur St. George

was, infact, Lizzie's sister—had been ennobled by marriage. On the whole, therefore, and seeing that Lizzie brought with her lovely face a fortune of £35,000, Mrs. Vane saw no reason to disapprove (albeit she never went the lengths of *owning* that Lizzie was quite worthy of her boy) of the marriage—the which event took place after Mrs. Blunt (as we may for the last time call her) had been dead a year.

The chief portion of that time was spent by Lizzie at Somerford Castle, with her sister, whom she had at last learned to know and love, and who, five months after Lord Arthur's death, gave birth (an event which caused great joy at Somerford) to an heir to the Marquisate.

"The title has been two hundred years in our family, and it would greatly distress me, I own, if it were to become extinct," said the good man, who was so soon to depart for the great, lone, unknown land, where titles are not, and earthly honours profit a man nothing. He lived, however, long enough to see that the young mother, to whose hands would be

entrusted the early training of the heir, was well worthy of the duty that had devolved upon her. No spoilt idol of a mother's heart would the young Marquis be; and, as a farther guarantee for his good and useful "raising," there appeared, by the time he had reached his second year, every prospect that a judicious step-father, in the shape of Frank Chamberlayne, would be provided for him.

High in the law, distinguished alike for eloquence and the soundness of his judgment and "opinion," Frank Chamberlayne became; and, following swiftly on his footsteps—for to exist on the fortune of a woman was, in the sight of Hartley Vane, to incur disgrace—was the happy husband of our lovely Lizzie.

At the good fortune of our hero, his *two*-armed friends have never ceased to wonder.

"By Jove! that fellow Vane has the d—l's own luck," remarked, one night at the Opera, an old Oxford acquaintance, who

had, between the acts of the 'Traviata,' been taking a leisurely survey, through a first-rate opera-glass, of Mrs. Hartley Vane. "By George!" he added to his neighbour, whilst still gazing at the handsome husband and wife, as they sat, unconscious that they were the observed of many observers, in their box on the first tier,—"By George!" continues Jack Mansfield, who is a briefless barrister, a Member of the Alpine Club, and fancies himself no end of an athlete, "to think of a one-armed fellow, with his head on one side, catching a glorious girl like that, with no end of tin! But, bah! It's disgusting to think of! How a woman can bring herself to marry a man born with that kind of deformity passes my comprehension."

"As it does mine," said a voice near him, the voice of Charlie Fendall of the Blues, "that a woman, when she well knows that a man is born with mental deformities far more hideous and revolting than those personal ones for which Hartley Vane is re-

markable, can, not only gratefully marry him, but can shut her eyes, because he is a "lord," to the fact that he is a *monster!*"

At that moment the orchestra sounded the first notes of the Second Act, and the short dialogue came to a close.

"He's thinking of Lord Arthur St. George," said briefless Jack to himself, as he resumed his seat. "Well, I suppose he was an awfully bad lot; but, by Jove! a one-armed man!"

And the Member of the Alpine Club, who could do so much with his limbs yet so little with his brain, strove, yet strove for that night in vain, to banish from his mind all thoughts of Hartley Vane and his successes. Discontent with himself, and with his lot, took, for the first time, strong hold upon his mind, and filled it with an unpleasant consciousness that he *might* have done something better with his life. For him, Patti warbled her sweetest strains in vain, and beauty, for the nonce, possessed for him no charms. The man who, by reason of a

physical infirmity, he had early taught himself to despise, had, in the race of life, run ahead of him, and, so true is it that

"Cui placet alterius sua nimirum est odio sors,"

Jack Mansfield—on that night at least—felt himself to be a miserable man!

THE END.

E. J. FRANCIS, TOOK'S COURT, CHANCERY LANE, E.C.

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S PUBLICATIONS.

ANNALS OF THE TWENTY-NINTH CENTURY; or, the Autobiography of the Tenth President of the World-Republic. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

"By mere force of originality will more than hold its own among the rank and file of Fiction."—*Examiner.*

"From beginning to end the book is one long catalogue of wonders. Very amusing, and will doubtless create some little sensation."—*Scotsman.*

HARRY'S BIG BOOTS: a Fairy Tale for "Smalle Folke." By S. E. GAY. With 8 Full-Page Illustrations and a Vignette by the Author, drawn on Wood by Percival Skelton. Crown 8vo. handsomely bound in cloth, price 5*s.*

EPITAPHIANA; or, the Curiosities of Churchyard Literature: being a Miscellaneous Collection of Epitaphs, with an Introduction. By W. FAIRLEY. Crown 8vo. cloth, 5*s.*

"Entertaining."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*
"A capital collection."—*Court Circular.*
"A very readable volume."—*Daily Review.*
"A most interesting book."—*Leeds Mercury.*
"Interesting and amusing."—*Nonconformist.*
"Particularly entertaining."—*Public Opinion.*
"A curious and entertaining volume."—*Oxford Chronicle.*
"A very interesting collection."—*Civil Service Gazette.*

The TICHBORNE and ORTON AUTOGRAPHS, comprising Autograph Letters of Roger Tichborne, Arthur Orton (to Mary Ann Loder), and the Defendant (early letters to Lady Tichborne, &c.), in fac-simile. Price 6*d.* post free, and of all Booksellers.

CHASTE AS ICE, PURE AS SNOW. By Mrs. M. C. DESPARD. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."
Hamlet.

DR. MIDDLETON'S DAUGHTER. By the Author of 'A Desperate Character.' 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

'TWIXT CUP AND LIP. By Mary Lovett-Cameron. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

JOHN FENN'S WIFE. By Maria Lewis. Crown 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.*

SHINGLEBOROUGH SOCIETY. 3 vols. 31s. 6d.

GAUNT ABBEY. By Mrs. Lysaght, Author of 'Building upon Sand,' 'Nearer and Dearer,' &c. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

SAMUEL TINSLEY, 10, Southampton Street, Strand.

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S

PUBLICATIONS.

FACT against FICTION: The Habits and Treatment of Animals practically considered; Hydrophobia and Distemper. With some Remarks on Darwin. By the Hon. GRANTLEY F. BERKELEY, Author of 'My Life and Recollections,' &c. 2 vols. 8vo. 30*s.*

THE MAGIC OF LOVE. By Mrs. Forrest-Grant, Author of 'Fair, but not Wise.' 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

OVER THE FURZE. By Rosa M. Kettle, Author of the 'Mistress of Langdale Hall,' &c. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

THE THORNTONS OF THORNBURY. By Mrs. HENRY LOWTHER CHERMSIDE. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

DISINTERRED. From the Boke of a Monk of Carden Abbey. By T. ESMONDE. Crown 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.*

BORN TO BE A LADY. By Katherine Henderson. Crown 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.*

WEBS OF LOVE. (I. A Lawyer's Device. II. Sancta Simplicitas.) By G. E. H. In 1 vol. crown 8vo. 6*s.*

LORD CASTLETON'S WARD. By Mrs. B. R. GREEN. 3 vols. 31*s.* 6*d.*

NEGLECTED: a Story of Nursery Education Thirty Years Ago. By Miss JULIA LUARD. Crown 8vo. 5*s.*

SAMUEL TINSLEY, 10, Southampton Street, Strand.

MAY, 1874.

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S

PUBLICATIONS.



LONDON:
SAMUEL TINSLEY, PUBLISHER,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

*** *Totally distinct from any other firm of Publishers.*

NOTICE.

The PRINTING and PUBLICATION of all Classes of BOOKS, Pamphlets, &c.— Apply to MR. SAMUEL TINSLEY, *Publisher*, 01, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.*

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S
NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE POPULAR NEW NOVELS, AT ALL LIBRARIES IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

A DESPERATE CHARACTER: a Tale of the Gold Fever. By W. THOMSON-GREGG. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A novel which cannot fail to interest."—*Daily News.*

ANNALS of the TWENTY-NINTH CENTURY; or, the Autobiography of the Tenth President of the World-Republic. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"From beginning to end the book is one long catalogue of wonders. . . . Very amusing, and will doubtless create some little sensation."—*Scotsman.*

"By mere force of originality will more than hold its own among the rank and file of fiction."—*Examiner.*

"Here is a work in certain respects one of the most singular in modern literature, which surpasses all of its class in bold and luxuriant imagination, in vivid descriptive power, in startling—not to say extravagant suggestions—in lofty and delicate moral sympathies. It is difficult to read it with a serious countenance: yet it is impossible not to read it with curious interest, and sometimes with profound admiration. The author's imagination hath run mad, but often there is more in his philosophy than the world may dream of. We have read his work with almost equal feelings of pleasure, wonderment, and amusement, and this, we think, will be the feelings of most of its readers. On the whole, it is a book of remarkable novelty and unquestionable genius."—*Nonconformist.*

"The adventures of President Milton . . . are told with excellent spirit. The vivid imagination of the author, and his serious and quaint narrative style, are not the only delightful features of this thoroughly amusing book."—*Public Opinion.*

AS THE FATES WOULD HAVE IT. By G. BERESFORD FITZGERALD. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

ALDEN OF ALDENHOLME. By GEORGE SMITH. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Pure and graceful. Above the average."—*Athenæum.*

BETWEEN TWO LOVES. By ROBERT J. GRIFFITHS, LL.D. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

BUILDING UPON SAND. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

"It is an eminently lady-like story, and pleasantly told. We can safely recommend 'Building upon Sand.'"—*Graphic.*

Samuel Tinsley, 10, Southampton Street Strand.

CRUEL CONSTANCY. By KATHARINE KING, Author of 'The Queen of the Regiment.' 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"It is a very readable novel, and contains much pleasant writing."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"Miss Katharine King is among the small number of novelists who do not disdain advice. Her present work is a much better novel than 'Lost for Gold.' The plot is very original, and the atmosphere of the story is healthy, full of breezy, open-air life, of cheerfulness, and harmless fun."—*Spectator.*

"In this story Miss King has made an advance. She has avoided many of the faults which are so apparent in 'Lost for Gold,' and she has bestowed much pains upon delineation of character and descriptions of Irish life. Her book possesses originality."—*Morning Post.*

DR. MIDDLETON'S DAUGHTER. By the Author of "A Desperate Character." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

FAIR, BUT NOT WISE. By Mrs. FORREST-GRANT. 2 vols., 21s.

"'Fair but not Wise' possesses considerable merit, and is both cleverly and powerfully written. If earnest, it is yet amusing and sometimes humorous, and the interest is well sustained from the first to the last page."—*Court Express.*

FIRST AND LAST. By F. VERNON-WHITE. 2 vols., 21s.

FOLLATON PRIORY. 2 vols., 21s.

"'Follaton Priory' is a thoroughly sensational story, written with more art than is usual in compositions of its class; and avoiding, skilfully, a melancholy termination."—*Sunday Times.*

GOLDEN MEMORIES. By EFFIE LEIGH. 2 vols., 21s.

"There is not a dull page in the book."—*Morning Post.*

GRAYWORTH: a Story of Country Life. By CARRY HAZELWOOD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Carey Hazelwood can write well."—*Examiner.*

"Many traces of good feeling and good taste, little touches of quiet humour, denoting kindly observation, and a genuine love of the country."—*Standard.*

HILLESDEN ON THE MOORS. By ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE, Author of "The Mistress of Langdale Hall." 2 vols., 21s.

"Thoroughly enjoyable, full of pleasant thoughts gracefully expressed, and eminently pure in tone."—*Public Opinion.*

IS IT FOR EVER? By KATE MAINWARING. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A work to be recommended. A thrillingly sensational novel."—*Sunday Times.*

JOHN FENN'S WIFE. By MARIA LEWIS. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

KITTY'S RIVAL. By SYDNEY MOSTYN, Author of 'The Surgeon's Secret,' etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Essentially dramatic and absorbing. We have nothing but unqualified praise for 'Kitty's Rival,' which we recommend as a fresh and natural story, full of homely pathos and kindly humour, and written in a style which shows the good sense of the author has been cultivated by the study of the works of the best of English writers."—*Public Opinion.*

NEARER AND DEARER. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT, Author of "Building upon Sand." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A capital story. . . very pleasant reading . . . With the exception of George Eliot, there is no other of our lady writers with whom Mrs. Lysaght will not favourably compare."—*Scotsman.*

"We have said the book is readable. It is more, it is both clever and interesting."—*Sunday Times.*

NO FATHERLAND. By MADAME VON OPPEN. 2 vols., 21s.

NOT TO BE BROKEN. By W. A. CHANDLER. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

PERCY LOCKHART. By F. W. BAXTER. 2 vols., 21s.

"A bright, fresh, healthy story. Eminently readable."—*Standard.*

"The novel altogether deserves praise. It is healthy in tone, interesting in plot and incident, and generally so well written that few persons would be able justly to find fault with it."—*Scotsman.*

RAVENSDALE. By ROBERT THYNNE, Author of "Tom Delany." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A well-told, natural, and wholesome story."—*Standard.*

"No one can deny merit to the writer."—*Saturday Review.*

SHINGLEBOROUGH SOCIETY. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

SONS OF DIVES. 2 vols., 21s.

"A well-principled and natural story."—*Athenæum.*

STRANDED, BUT NOT LOST. By DOROTHY BROMYARD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

THE BARONET'S CROSS. By MARY MERRK, Author of "Marion's Path through Shadow to Sunshine." 2 vols., 21s.

"A novel suited to the palates of eager consumers of fiction."—*Sunday Times.*

THE HEIR OF REDDESMONT. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Full of interest and life."—*Echo,*

TOO LIGHTLY BROKEN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A very pleasing story very prettily told."—*Morning Post.*

TOWER HALLOWDEANE. 2 vols., 21s.

THE D'EYNCOURTS OF FAIRLEIGH. By THOMAS ROWLAND SKEMP. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"An exceedingly readable novel, full of various and sustained interest. The interest is well kept up all through."—*Daily Telegraph.*

THE SECRET OF TWO HOUSES. By FANNY FISHER. 2 vols., 21s.

"Thoroughly dramatic."—*Public Opinion.*
"The story is well told."—*Sunday Times.*

THE SEDGEBOROUGH WORLD. By A. FARE-BROTHER. 2 vols., 21s.

"There is no little novelty and a large fund of amusement in 'The Sedgeborough World.'"—*Illustrated London News.*

TIMOTHY CRIPPLE; or, "Life's a Feast." By THOMAS AURIOL ROBINSON. 2 vols., 21s.

"This is a most amusing book, and the author deserves great credit for the novelty of his design, and the quaint humour with which it is worked out."—*Public Opinion.*

"For abundance of humour, variety of incident, and idiomatic vigour of expression, Mr. Robinson deserves, and will no doubt receive, great credit."—*Civil Service Review.*

THE TRUE STORY OF HUGH NOBLE'S FLIGHT. By the Authoress of "What Her Face Said." 10s. 6d.

"A pleasant story, with touches of exquisite pathos, well told by one who is master of an excellent and sprightly style."—*Standard.*

"An unpretending, yet very pathetic story. . . . We can congratulate the author on having achieved a signal success."—*Graphic.*

THE INSIDIOUS THIEF: a Tale for Humble Folks. By One of Themselves. Crown 8vo., 5s. Second Edition,

TOM DELANY. By ROBERT THYNNE, Author of "Ravensdale." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A very bright, healthy, simply-told story."—*Standard.*

"All the individuals whom the reader meets at the gold-fields are well-drawn, amongst whom not the least interesting is 'Terrible Mac.'"—*Hour.*

"There is not a dull page in the book."—*Scotsman.*

THE SURGEON'S SECRET. By SYDNEY MOSTYN, Author of "Kitty's Rival," etc. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

"A most exciting novel—the best on our list. It may be fairly recommended as a very extraordinary book."—*John Bull.*

"A stirring drama, with a number of closely connected scenes, in which there are not a few legitimately sensational situations. There are many spirited passages."—*Public Opinion.*

TWIXT CUP and LIP. By MARY LOVETT-CAMERON. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Displays signs of more than ordinary promise. . . . As a whole the novel cannot fail to please. Its plot is one that will arrest attention; and its characters, one and all, are full of life and have that nameless charm which at once attracts and retains the sympathy of the reader."—*Daily News.*

WAGES: a Story in Three Books. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A work of no commonplace character."—*Sunday Times.*

WEBS OF LOVE. (I. A Lawyer's Device. II. Sancta Simplicitas.) By G. E. H. 1 vol., Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

WEIMAR'S TRUST. By Mrs. EDWARD CHRISTIAN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A novel which deserves to be read, and which, once begun, will not be readily laid aside till the end."—*Scotsman.*

WILL SHE BEAR IT? A Tale of the Weald. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"This is a clever story, easily and naturally told, and the reader's interest sustained throughout. . . . A pleasant, readable book, such as we can heartily recommend as likely to do good service in the dull and foggy days before us."—*Spectator.*

"Written with simplicity, good feeling, and good sense, and marked throughout by a high moral tone, which is all the more powerful from never being obtrusive. . . . The interest is kept up with increasing power to the last."—*Standard.*

"The story is a love tale, and the interest is almost entirely confined to the heroine, who is certainly a good girl, bearing unmerited sorrow with patience and resignation. The heroine's young friend is also attractive. . . . As for the seventh commandment, its breach is not even alluded to."—*Athenæum.*

"There is abundance of individuality in the story, the characters are all genuine, and the atmosphere of the novel is agreeable. It is really interesting. On the whole, it may be recommended for general perusal."—*Sunday Times.*

"'Will She Bear it?' is a story of English country life. . . . It is no small praise to say that the tone of the book throughout is thoroughly pure and healthy, without being either dull or namby-pamby."—*Illustrated Review.*

"A story of English country life in the early part of this century, thoroughly clever and interesting, and pleasantly and naturally told. In every way we entertain a very high opinion of this book."—*Graphic.*

NOVELS RECENTLY PUBLISHED OR IN THE PRESS, April 15th, 1874.

BARBARA'S WARNING. By the Author of "Recommended to Mercy." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

BORN TO BE A LADY. By KATHERINE HENDERSON. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

SECOND EDITION.

CHASTE AS ICE, PURE AS SNOW. By Mrs. M. C. DESPARD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

DISINTERRED. From the Boke of a Monk of Carden Abbey. By T. ESMONDE. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

GAUNT ABBEY. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT, Author of "Building upon Sand," "Nearer and Dearer," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

MARY GRAINGER: A Story. 2 vols., 21s.

NEGLECTED; a Story of Nursery Education Forty Years Ago. By Miss JULIA LUARD. Crown 8vo., 5s. cloth.

LORD CASTLETON'S WARD. By Mrs. B. R. GREEN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

OVER THE FURZE. By ROSA M. KETTLE, Author of the "Mistress of Langdale Hall," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

THE MAGIC OF LOVE. By Mrs. FORREST-GRANT, Author of "Fair, but not Wise." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

THE THORNTONS OF THORNBURY. By Mrs. HENRY LOWTHER CHERMSIDE. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

WON BACK AT LAST. By Mrs. EILOART, Author of "The Curate's Discipline," "Just a Woman," "Woman's Wrong," &c. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

Notice:

NEW SYSTEM OF PUBLISHING ORIGINAL NOVELS.

Vol. I.

THE MISTRESS OF LANGDALE HALL: a Romance of the West Riding. By Rosa Mackenzie Kettle. Complete in one handsome volume, with Frontispiece and Vignette by Percival Skelton. 4s., post free.

(*From THE SATURDAY REVIEW.*)

Generally speaking, in criticising a novel we confine our observations to the merits of the author. In this case we must make an exception, and say something as to the publisher. The *Mistress of Langdale Hall* does not come before us in the stereotyped three-volume shape, with rambling type, ample margins, and nominally a guinea and a half to pay. On the contrary, this new aspirant to public admiration appears in the modest guise of a single graceful volume, and we confess that we are disposed to give a kindly welcome to the author, because we may flatter ourselves that she is in some measure a *protégée* of our own. A few weeks ago an article appeared in our columns censuring the prevailing fashion of publishing novels at nominal and fancy prices. Necessarily, we dealt a good deal in commonplaces, the absurdity of the fashion being so obvious. We explained, what is well known to every one interested in the matter, that the regulation price is purely illusory. The publisher in reality has to drive his own bargain with the libraries, who naturally beat him down. The author suffers, the trade suffers, and the libraries do not gain. Arguing that a palpable absurdity must be exploded some day unless all the world is qualified for Bedlam, we felt ourselves on tolerably safe ground when we ventured to predict an approaching revolution. Judging from the preface to this book, we may conjecture that it was partly on our hint that Mr. Tinsley has published. As all prophets must welcome events that tend to the speedy accomplishment of their predictions, we confess ourselves gratified by the promptitude with which Mr. Tinsley has acted, and we heartily wish his venture success. He recognises that a reformation so radical must be a work of time, and at first may possibly seem to defeat its object. For it is plain that the public must first be converted to a proper regard for its own interest; and, by changing the borrowing for the buying system, must come in to buy the publisher out. He must look, moreover, to the support and imitation of his brethren of the trade. We doubt not he has made the venture after all due de-

liberation, and that we may rely on his determination seconding his enterprise. All prospectuses of new undertakings tend naturally to exaggeration, but success will be well worth the waiting for, should it be only the shadow of that on which Mr. Tinsley reckons. He gives some surprising figures; he states some startling facts; and, as a practical man, he draws some practical conclusions. He quotes a statement of Mr. Charles Reade's, to the effect that three publishers in the United States had disposed of no less than 370,000 copies of Mr. Reade's latest novel. He estimates that the profits on that sale—the book being published at a dollar—must amount to £25,000. Mr. Reade, of course, has a name, and we can conceive that his faults and blemishes may positively recommend themselves to American taste. But Mr. Tinsley remarks that if a publisher could sell 70,000 copies in any case, there would still be £5,000 of clear gain; and even if the new system had a much more moderate success than that, all parties would still profit amazingly. For Mr. Tinsley calculates the profits of a sale of 2,000 copies of a three volume edition at £1,000; and we should fancy the experience of most authors would lead them to believe he overstates it. It will be seen that at all events the new speculation promises brilliantly, and reason and common-sense conspire to tell us that the reward must come to him who has patience to wait. *Palmam qui meruit ferat*, and may he have his share of the profits too. Meanwhile, here we have the first volume of Mr. Tinsley's new series in most legible type, in portable form, and with a sufficiently attractive exterior. The price is four shillings, and, the customary trade deduction being made to circulating libraries, it leaves them without excuse should they deny it to the order of their customers.

We should apologise to Miss Kettle for keeping her waiting while we discuss business matters with her publisher. But she knows, no doubt, that there are times when business must take precedence of pleasure, and conscientious readers are bound to dispose of the preface before proceeding to the book. For we may say at once that we have found pleasure in reading her story. In the first place, it has a strong and natural local colouring, and we always like anything that gives a book individuality. In the next, there is a feminine grace about her pictures of nature and delineations of female character, and that always makes a story attractive. Finally, there is a certain interest that carries us along, although the story is loosely put together, and the demands on our credulity are somewhat incessant and importunate. The scene is laid in the West Riding of Yorkshire; nor did it need the dedication of the book to tell us that the author was an old resident in the county. With considerable artistic

subtlety she lays her scenes in the very confines of busy life. Cockneys and professional foreign tourists are much in the way of believing that the manufacturing districts are severed from the genuinely rural ones by a hard-and-fast line; that the demons of cotton, coal, and wool blight everything within the scope of their baleful influence. There can be no greater blunder; native intelligence might tell us that mills naturally follow water power, and that a broad stream and a good fall generally imply wooded banks and sequestered ravines, swirling pools, and rushing rapids. Miss Kettle, as a dweller in the populous and flourishing West Riding, has learned all that, of course. She is aware besides of the power of contrast; that peace and solitude are never so much appreciated as when you have just quitted the bustle of life, and hear its hum mellowed by the distance. Romance is never so romantic as when it rubs shoulders with the practical, and sensation 'piles itself up' when it is evolved in the centre of commonplace life.

The story is interesting and very pleasantly written, and for the sake of both author and publisher we cordially wish it the reception it deserves.

Vol. II.

PUTTYPUT'S PROTÉGÉE; or, Road, Rail, and River. A Story in Three Books. By HENRY GEORGE CHURCHILL. Crown 8vo., (uniform with "The Mistress of Langdale Hall"), with 14 illustrations by WALLIS MACKAY. Post free, 4s. Second edition.

"It is a lengthened and diversified farce, full of screaming fun and comic delineation—a reflection of Dickens, Mrs. Malaprop, and Mr. Boucicault, and dealing with various descriptions of social life. We have read and laughed, pooh-poohed, and read again, ashamed of our interest, but our interest has been too strong for our shame. Readers may do worse than surrender themselves to its melo-dramatic enjoyment. From title-page to colophon, only Dominie Sampson's epithet can describe it—it is 'prodigious.'"—*British Quarterly Review.*

"It is impossible to read 'Puttyput's Protégée' without being reminded at every turn of the contemporary stage, and the impression it leaves on the mind is very similar to that produced by witnessing a whole evening's entertainment at one of our popular theatres."—*Echo.*

NOTICE.—New Story Suitable for Girls, &c.

FLORENCE; or, Loyal Quand Même. By FRANCES ARMSTRONG. Crown 8vo., 5s., cloth. Post free.

"It is impossible not be interested in the story from beginning to end. . . . We congratulate Mr. Samuel Tinsley on continuing to break at intervals the monotonous line of three-volume novels."—*Examiner.*

"A very charming love story, eminently pure and lady-like in tone, effective and interesting in plot, and, rarest praise of all, written in excellent English."—*Civil Service Review.*

"We should gladly welcome many more such novels, in preference to the trash which but too frequently passes current for such."—*Brighton Observer.*

"We cannot close this very interesting work without commending it to every reader."—*Durham County Advertiser.*

"The book is excellently printed and nicely bound—in fact it is one which authoress, publisher, and reader may alike regard with mingled satisfaction and pleasure."—*Nottingham Daily Guardian.*

"'Florence' is readable, even interesting in every part."—*The Scotsman.*

"Suffice it to say that from beginning to end each character is well brought out, and what is perhaps best of all, there is a healthy vigour and genuine ring about the whole composition which goes far to show that a truly chaste tone, sustained throughout, is in no way incompatible with a most engrossing story."—*Cornish Telegraph.*

"'Florence' is a healthy, high-toned story, which every one can read with pleasure and gratification. . . . The author writes with vivacity and effect. To her the creation of Florence has evidently been a labour of love, and we feel convinced that few readers will close the book without feeling that they share in the affection with which the heroine is regarded by the author."—*Leeds Mercury.*

"Several of the characters introduced are drawn with a master hand, Florence herself being especially worthy of admiration."—*Hastings and St. Leonards Advertiser.*

"The book is decidedly far superior in tone to the generality of novels, and is well worth reading. . . . Miss Armstrong gives us much ground for hope that her pen will be fertile."—*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper.*

"'Florence' is therefore (as we said to begin with) a pleasant and readable story, and as its influences cannot be otherwise than beneficial, we hope it will be widely read."—*Edinburgh Daily Review.*

"It is essentially a lady's book, and is deserving of the highest praise."—*Irish Daily Telegraph.*

"We cordially wish the work may meet with the success it deserves; but of this we have no doubt."—*Derbyshire Courier.*

"Miss Armstrong has written a very agreeable story, much more interesting than many three-volume novels it has been our misfortune to read. . . . Instead of spinning out a dreary, colourless romance of interminable length, Miss Armstrong has preferred to present to her readers a bright lively, natural story of every day life."—*Public Opinion.*

EPITAPHIANA; or, the Curiosities of Churchyard Literature: being a Miscellaneous Collection of Epitaphs, with an INTRODUCTION. By W. FAIRLEY. Crown 8vo., cloth, price 5s. Post free.

"An amusing book. . . . A capital collection of epitaphs."—*Court Circular.*

"Mr. Fairley's industry has been rewarded by an assemblage of grotesque and fantastic epitaphs, such as we never remember to have seen equalled. They fill an elegantly printed volume."—*Cork Examiner.*

"Although we have picked several plums from Mr. Fairley's book, we can assure our readers that there are plenty more left. And now that the long evenings are once more stealing upon us, and the fireside begins to be comfortable, suggesting a book and a quiet read, let us recommend Mr. Fairley, who comes before us in the handsome guise and the capital type of the enterprising Mr. Samuel Tinsley."—*Derbyshire Advertiser.*

"His collection is not only amusing, but has a certain historical value, as illustrating the rough humour in which our forefathers frequently indulged at the expense of the departed."—*Staffordshire Advertiser.*

"We have quoted enough to show that Mr. Fairley has produced a curious and entertaining volume, which will well repay perusal."—*Oxford Chronicle.*

"On the score of novelty, at least, 'Epitaphiana' will attract considerable attention."—*Irish Daily Telegraph.*

"Mr. Fairley has a keen eye for a quaint epitaph, and an excellent sense of what is humorous or pathetic. . . . The volume contains an excellent introduction relating to ancient and modern burials, and is published in an attractive form."—*Civil Service Gazette.*

"Mr. Fairley has made a quaint and curious collection."—*The Court Circular.*

"A very interesting book, the materials industriously gathered from many cities of the Silent Land, and the miscellaneous collection carefully prepared for publication."—*Colliery Guardian.*

"In noticing this most interesting book, we feel we can commend it in all sincerity; for just as a chapter from 'Pickwick' is an antidote to *ennui*, 'Epitaphiana' may be pronounced as equally reviving to dull spirits. . . . The volume itself is quite a work of art."—*The Forester.*

"Mr. Fairley seems to have gathered these scraps from village churchyards and elsewhere, simply for his own amusement, but they have swollen to such proportions that he has been induced to publish them; and the subject matter of his volume is particularly entertaining."—*Public Opinion.*

"A very readable volume."—*Daily Review.*

POETRY, Etc.

MISPLACED LOVE. A Tale of Love, Sin, Sorrow, Remorse and Madness. 1 vol., crown 8vo., 5s.

THE SOUL SPEAKS, and other Poems. By Francis H. Hemery. In wrapper, 1s.

SUMMER SHADE AND WINTER SUNSHINE: Poems. By Rosa Mackenzie Kettle, Author of "The Mistress of Langdale Hall." New Edition. 2s. 6d., cloth.

THE WITCH of NEMI, and other Poems. By Edward Brennan. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

MARY DESMOND, AND OTHER POEMS. By Nicholas J. Gannon. Fcp. 8vo., 4s., cloth.

THE GOLDEN PATH: a Poem. By Isabella Stuart. 6d., sewed.

THE REDBREAST OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: Lines from the Latin of Peter du Moulin, sometime a Prebendary of Canterbury. Translated by the Rev. F. B. Wells, M.A., Rector of Woodchurch. Handsomely bound, price 1s.

NOTICE.—A new work by the Hon. Grantley F. Berkeley.

FACT AGAINST FICTION. The Habits and Treatment of Animals Practically Considered. Hydrophobia and Distemper. With some remarks on Darwin. By the HON. GRANTLEY F. BERKELEY. 2 vols., 8vo., 30s.

HARRY'S BIG BOOTS: a Fairy Tale, for "Smalle Folke." By S. E. GAY. With 8 Full-page Illustrations and a Vignette by the author, drawn on wood by PERCIVAL SKELTON. Crown 8vo., handsomely bound in cloth, price 5s.

"'Harry's Big Boots' is sure of a large and appreciative audience. It is as good as a Christmas pantomime, and its illustrations are quite equal to any transformation scene. . . . The pictures of Harry and Harry's seven-leagued boots, with their little wings and funny faces, leave nothing to be desired."—*Daily News.*

"Some capital fun will be found in 'Harry's Big Boots.' . . . The illustrations are excellent, and so is the story."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

MOVING EARS. By the Ven. Archdeacon WEAKHEAD, Rector of Newtown, Kent. 1 vol., crown 8vo., 5s.

A TRUE FLEMISH STORY. By the Author of "The Eve of St. Nicholas." In wrapper, 1s.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE SECTS. Crown 8vo., price 5s.

ANOTHER WORLD; or, Fragments from the Star City of Montalluyah. By HERMES. Third Edition, revised, with additions. Post 8vo., price 12s.

THE TICHBORNE TRIAL, and Orton Autographs; comprising Autograph Letters of Roger Tichborne, Arthur Orton (to Mary Ann Loder), and the Defendant (early letters to Lady Tichborne, &c.), in facsimile. In wrapper, price 6d.

BALAK AND BALAAM IN EUROPEAN COSTUME. By the Rev. JAMES KEAN, M.A., Assistant to the Incumbent of Markinch, Fife. 6d., sewed.

ANOTHER ROW AT DAME EUROPA'S SCHOOL. Showing how John's Cook made an IRISH STEW, and what came of it. 6d., sewed.

THE FALL OF MAN: An Answer to Mr. Darwin's "Descent of Man;" being a Complete Refutation, by common-sense arguments, of the Theory of Natural Selection. 1s., sewed.





